DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 403 CS 011 832

AUTHOR Strickland, Dorothy S.; And Others
TITLE School Book Clubs and Literacy Development: A Descriptive Study. Report Series 2.22.
INSTITUTION National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, Albany, NY.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 94
CONTRACT R117G10015
NOTE 81p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; Content Analysis; Elementary Education; *Literacy; *Parent Attitudes; *Reading Habits; *Reading Materials; Reading Research; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Book Clubs; Descriptive Research

ABSTRACT

A series of three studies investigated how school book clubs fit into the elementary language arts curriculum and how they contribute to children's literacy. Study 1 interviewed 71 administrators, teachers, and parents by telephone and also interviewed parents and students in urban, rural, and suburban schools in different parts of the United States. Study 2 examined the contributions of 12 children in 6 elementary schools over a period of one year. Study 3 analyzed the entire offerings of the three major book clubs (Scholastic, Troll, Trumpet). Results from all three studies indicated that (1) the school book clubs played a large role in the provision of books and other materials to children, teachers, and parents; (2) while book clubs still regarded their primary purpose as supplying children with books and other material, they appear, in the past few years, to have become a major supplier of literacy materials to classrooms; (3) some teachers and parents complained about the presence of what they call "junk" and "fad" material; (4) some teachers were uneasy about the intrusion of commercial enterprises into their classroom; and (5) lack of parental funds was a major problem for classroom teachers. Results also indicated ways in which book clubs played a role in children's literacy growth: book clubs were putting books directly into the hands of large numbers of children across the country; and book club books were used to promote literacy development among all children in the class, not just those who participated in the clubs. (Contains 12 references, 22 tables, and four figures of data.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 374 403

School Book Clubs and Literacy Development: A Descriptive Study

Dorothy S. Strickland
Sean A. Walmsley
Genevieve T. Bronk
Kenneth Weiss

National Research Center on Literature Teaching & Learning
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY • SUNY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS011832

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Literature Center

School of Education • 1400 Washington Avenue • Albany, New York 12222

School Book Clubs and Literacy Development: A Descriptive Study

Dorothy S. Strickland
Sean A. Walmsley
Genevieve T. Bronk
Kenneth Weiss

National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning
University at Albany
State University of New York
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12222

Report Series 2.22

1994

Preparation of this report was supported under the Educational Research and Development Center Program (Grant number R117G10015) as administered by the Office of Research, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not neccessarily reflect the position or policies of the sponsoring agency.

National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning

The National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning is a research and development center located at the University at Albany, State University of New York. The Center was established in 1987 (as the Center for Learning and Teaching of Literature), and in January 1991 began a new, five-year cycle of work sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The Center's mission is to conduct research and sponsor activities to improve the teaching of literature, preschool through grade 12, in schools across the nation.

Center-sponsored research falls into three broad areas: teaching and learning processes, curriculum and assessment, and social and cultural traditions in the teaching and learning of literature. Special attention is given to the role of literature in the teaching and learning of students at risk for school failure, and to the development of higher-level literacy skills, literary understanding, and critical thinking skills in all students.

For information on current publications and activities, write to: Literature Center, School of Education, University at Albany, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Diane Tracey, a research associate, who played a major role in the gathering and analysis of data for Studies 1 and 2. We are grateful to James Flood, Beth Marr, Ellen Treadway, Cindy Lopez, and Michele Lucas, who collected off-site data (and to James Flood, William Teale, and Jo-Beth Allen for organizing the remote site data collection); and to Wendy Wollner and Michele Whipple, who assisted with the analysis of over 3,000 books. We are especially indebted to the hundreds of students, parents and teachers who participated in Study 1; and to the students and teachers in Study 2, who allowed us to spend a year with them, looking closely at their book club experiences. We also acknowledge the participation of the three major book club publishers, who not only took time to talk with us at length about their clubs, but also graciously donated an entire year's worth of books for us to analyze. Finally, we are indebted to the M.R. Robinson Fund, whose grant funded this research project, and to the National Center for the Study of the Teaching and Learning of Literature at SUNY-Albany (for their co-sponsorship); to Kent Allison for coordinating the entire study, and to Dick Spaulding, Barbara Marcus, Cynthia Maloney, Betsy Poris, and Tom Noone for their guidance and support throughout the study period.

School Book Clubs and Literacy Development: A Descriptive Study

Dorothy S. Strickland
Rutgers University

Sean A. Walmsley
University at Albany, SUNY

Genevieve T. Bronk
University at Albany, SUNY

Kenneth Weiss
Nazareth University

Every month, in thousands of elementary classrooms across the United States, children make their selections of books and other literacy-related materials from a school book club, bring in their money from home, and, three weeks later, receive their selections. There are several school book clubs that offer discounted books and other materials (e.g., audio tapes, videotapes, stickers, posters, pencils) to children and teachers from Kindergarten to 9th grade. There are three major book clubs: Scholastic (which has different clubs for different grade levels—*Firefly* for Pre-K; *See Saw* for grades K-1; *Lucky* for grades 2-3, *Arrow* for grades 4-6, and *Tab* for grades 7-9); Troll (which has*Troll pre-K/K* for pre-school and Kindergarten, *Troll 1* for grades K-1, *Troll 2* for grades 2-3, *Troll 3* for grades 4-6, and *Troll 4 High Tops* for grades 7-9) and Trumpet (which has *Early Years* for grades Pre-K-K, *Primary Years* for grades 1-3, and *Middle Years* for grades 4-6). Students and teachers may also choose books from the *Golden Book Club* (K-2, launched in 1991 by Western Publishing), or from two book clubs offered through Weekly Reader Magazine (*Discovering*, for grades 3-6; and *Carnival*, for grades K-2).

Scholastic introduced the first school book club, *Tab*, a book club for teenagers, in 1947. Arrow was launched in 1957, and by 1986 the full line of clubs had been developed. Troll introduced its first club (now *Troll 2*) in 1978 and quickly expanded to five clubs. Trumpet started its first club, *Middle Years*, in 1985, and added *Primary Years* in 1989, then *Early Years* in 1991.

Despite their widespread use, very little is known about how these book clubs fit into the elementary language arts curriculum, nor how they contribute to children's literacy and literary development. Indeed, this study is, we believe, the first of its kind to focus on the nature and use of the school book clubs.

There are a number of questions that seem appropriate to ask about school book clubs:

(1) *How do teachers use school book clubs in promoting children's literacy development?* It would be useful to know from teachers how they view the contribution of school book clubs to children's literacy development, how they fit school book clubs into their language arts program, what techniques they use to relate children's school book club reading to their classroom reading, if and how they introduce school book club selections, and if and how they guide

children's choices of school book club selections;

(2) *How do parents use school book clubs in promoting their children's literacy development?* It would be useful to learn from parents how they view the contribution of school book clubs to their children's literacy development, in what kinds of ways they influence their children's school book club choices, and how they use the school book club selections at home;

(3) *How do children use school book clubs in their own literacy development?* It would be useful to know something about the choices made by children, especially to see if there are discernible patterns of behavior in their choices related to stages in their literacy development. We also could learn about how children use their school book club selections in their own literacy development. For example, do they use book club selections to provide themselves with material that's predictable and "safe" for them to read on their own, while they struggle with classroom reading material? Or do they use book clubs to extend their classroom reading material, and to provide more challenging literary experiences than those provided in their basal readers? Is there a stage of literacy development beyond which book clubs have little or nothing to offer? Do book clubs serve social as well as literary roles in children's lives--in other words, are the selections shared among friends, and discussed "privately" outside the formal structure of the classroom?

In summary, while book clubs are used as universally as basal readers in elementary and early secondary classrooms, almost nothing has been reported in the professional literature about how they are used, nor what benefits accrue to children, parents, and teachers through their use.

We designed several studies to address the research questions posed above. Our original plan was to conduct two kinds of surveys, one via telephone of a large national sample of teachers, the other a smaller study of a few selected schools, where we could interview teachers, students, and parents in a single site. After experiencing a disappointing return from the national survey, we decided to enlarge the on-site interview study, and combine the two sources of data. These two sources of data are presented in Study 1.

We also conducted a study (Study 2) in which we tracked 12 children in six schools in New Jersey and New York over the course of a year, keeping records of their school book club purchases, their classroom literary experiences, and the ways in which their teachers used the school book clubs in their language arts program.

Since we wanted to know something about the kinds of books that students purchased from school book clubs (for example, what they purchased versus what was available to them), we decided to analyze the entire offerings of the three major book club publishers. While some of this analysis is used in Study 2, the data provide a sufficiently comprehensive view of the range and kinds of materials offered by the book clubs to warrant being presented separately, in Study 3.

In this report, each study is described separately, followed by a concluding section that presents the findings

as a whole.

Study 1: Survey of School Book Club Usage

In this study, we interviewed a cross-section of teachers, administrators, parents, and students, K-8, to learn how they view the contribution of school book clubs to literacy development, and how they use school book clubs in their school and family literacy activities. We also interviewed the publishers of the major school book clubs to learn about the aims of the various book clubs and the ways in which publishers think book clubs should be used in the context of school and family literacy.

To provide an adequate cross-section of teachers, administrators, parents, and students, we obtained two separate samples of respondents. First, we acquired a mailing list of 5,000 names of teachers, specialists, and administrators residing in the continental United States, and drew 1,000 names at random from this list. We then sent each person an invitation to participate in the study, asking them to return a permission slip, so that we could telephone them. There were 105 responses from this mailing, and 71 interviews were subsequently conducted over the telephone. Second (partly as a result of the poor returns from the national mailings), we conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, and students in urban, rural, and suburban schools in different parts of the U.S. (see Table 1). We chose the sites on the basis of their geography (representing East Coast, West Coast, South, and Midwest), the relative wealth of the community in which the schools were located (from wealthy to poor), and the kind of community (urban, rural, suburban).

In each of these sites, we attempted to interview 2 students per grade level (K-8), their classroom teacher, one of the 2 students' parents, and the school administrator (if available).[1] In this way, we were able to "triangulate" the data from the various respondents. In our sampling, we tried to ensure that all the school book clubs were fairly represented: in other words, we attempted to interview comparable numbers of teachers using one of the three major clubs--Scholastic, Troll, Trumpet--but we also interviewed teachers who use other clubs (e.g., Discovering, Golden, Weekly Reader Book Club).[2]

We deliberately chose interviews over questionnaires, partly because of the traditionally poor rate of return for written surveys, but mostly because in interviews, answers can be probed, and specific circumstances can be explored. For this study, we used a structured interview, in which we asked respondents a number of questions, but allowed them time to elaborate on their answers. We also probed answers given to questions, where appropriate, so that the full circumstances surrounding a response could be properly explored. For example, we asked teachers how they

---

[1] We found that many administrators knew very little about the book clubs, and were frequently unwilling to talk with us about them. Eventually, the numbers of administrators who knew about book clubs and who were willing to be interviewed was so small as to render the data uninterpretable. Hence, we do not report administrative data.

[2] The purpose of Study 1 was not to make direct comparisons between the different school book clubs, but rather to learn how teachers, parents and students view book clubs, and how book clubs are used in school and at home. In the analysis of the data, we do not refer to any school book club by name.

Table 1
Distribution of Sites for Study 1 Remote-Site Interviews

State	Urban	Rural	Suburban
CA	S. Elem (K-5, Avge) B.W. Elem (K-6, Avge) L.M. Middle (6-8, Avge) H.M. Middle (7-8, Poor)	P. Elem (K-8, Wealthy)	S.R. Elem (K-8, Wealthy)
GA	O. Elem (K-5, Av/Poor) C. Middle (6-8, Mixed)	S.J. Elem (K-5, Av/Poor)	H. Middle (6-8, Mixed)
IL	B.W. Elem (K-5, Rel. Poor) F.M. Middle (6-8, Mixed)		
IN	W. Middle (6-7, Wealthy) B. Elem (K-6, Av/Poor; *Urban-Suburban*)		P. Elem (K-6, Mixed) E. Jr High (6-8, Rel. Wealthy)
TX		F. Elem (PreK-1, Mixed) B. Middle (6-8, Rel. Wealthy)	B. Elem (2-5, Rel. Wealthy)
NY		H. School (K-12, Av/Poor)	O. Elem (K-6, Rel. Wealthy) K. Jr High (7-8, Rel. Wealthy)
NJ	C. School (K-6, Av/Poor)		
NC	C. School (K-12, Wealthy)		

use school book clubs in their language arts program. If they gave responses that provided only a partial explanation of how book clubs are used, we probed for more information. But if a teacher uses book clubs in a way that our questions did not probe, she would be given ample opportunity to explain her approach in her own way. All the interview protocols were tested, and revised.

Analysis of the Data

The data from these interviews was entered into a database that not only coded checked-off items, but also recorded all comments made by the respondent. In this way, we were able to create new categories for items, and to efficiently analyze the many additional remarks made by the respondents. For the quantitative analyses, items were summed and averaged; for the qualitative analyses, repeated readings of respondents' comments were made, and then summarized.

Findings, Study 1

Teachers' views of and experiences with school book clubs

Two-hundred eleven teachers participated in Study 1. Ninety-one percent (191 of the 211) used school book clubs in their classrooms at the time we interviewed them. From the information they gave us about themselves and about their schools, we learned the following:

- they are fairly experienced teachers, having taught for an average of 15.5 years
- their average class size is 32 (class size in grades K-5 is 24; grades 6-8 is 59;)
- their average school size is just over 600 pupils;
- 43% of their schools are suburban; 29% urban; 22% rural; 4% suburban/urban; and 1% suburban/rural;
- 5% of their schools are in wealthy communities; 32% are in relatively wealthy communities; 22% in communities of average wealth; 18% in relatively poor communities; 11% in poor communities; 9% in mixed wealth communities;
- 27 respondents were Kindergarten teachers; 26, 1st grade; 30, 2nd grade; 28, 3rd grade; 21, 4th grade; 22, 5th grade; 23, 6th grade; 23, 7th grade; 18, 8th grade; 5, reading specialists (the numbers do not total 211 because some teachers taught more than one grade)

Which book clubs did teachers use? All existing book clubs were represented in the sample, with teachers reporting the following usage (the numbers do not total 191, because many teachers used more than one book club):

Scholastic Firefly	5
Scholastic Seesaw	47
Scholastic Lucky	40
Scholastic Arrow	53
Scholastic Tab	36
Troll 1	23
Troll 2	36
Troll 3	45
Troll 4	5
Trumpet (EY)	25
Trumpet (PY)	20

Trumpet (MY)	22
Weekly Reader	10
Discovering	6
Carnival	4

How many book clubs do teachers use? Of the 211 teachers we interviewed, 20 use no clubs at all; 75 use 1 club only; 70 use 2 clubs; 27 use 3 clubs; 12 use 4 clubs; 4 use 5 clubs; and 3 use 6 clubs.

What is the nature of teachers' participation in the book clubs? Not one of the respondents is required to subscribe to a book club, and 97% of the teachers choose the book club they use.

How often do teachers send in the order forms? Of the 189 teachers who responded to this question. 70% send them in every month; 14% send them in nearly every month; 10% send them in every two months; and 5% send them in either when there's a specific selection, or for other reasons.

What guidelines do teachers have for their students' participation? Of the 190 teachers who responded to this question. 56% insist that participation is entirely voluntary; 44% say that participation is voluntary, but they encourage students to participate; not a single teacher said that they require students to participate. We also asked if teachers had particular guidelines for students to use in selecting books and other material: 92% had no guidelines (in other words, students could choose what they wanted); 7% required that parents approved of the students' choices; not a single teacher insisted that they–the teacher–approve of a child's choices.

How many children participate in book clubs, and how many don't? We asked teachers to tell us how many of the students in their class ordered every time, or nearly every time, and how many either did not participate, or participated very rarely. Of the 6641 students teachers had in their classes, 1588 (23.9%) participated either every time or nearly every time; 2650 (39.9%) either did not participate, or participated very rarely; and 2403 students (36.2%) participated some of the time. If these figures are broken down by grade level, a clearer picture of participation emerges (see Table 2).

In other words, 60% of the students ordered either every time, or nearly every time, or sometimes, while 40% either did not participate at all, or participated very rarely. However, even the 40% who never or rarely order are likely to come into contact with the book club books, because so many of the books are being purchased for use in classrooms.

Book club participation, according to the teachers we interviewed, is greatest during the early elementary years, and tails off sharply after 6th grade.

Why did teachers think students participated, or didn't participate? One hundred sixty-four teachers responded

Table 2
Percentages of Children Participating in Book Clubs, K-8

Grade	% Participating (every time, or nearly every time)	% Not Participating (at all, or very rarely)
K	27.5	37.3
1	37.0	34.4
2	34.8	34.8
3	37.8	26.3
4	26.6	39.2
5	23.7	30.5
6	27.2	37.7
7	11.3	49.8
8	6.4	52.2

to this question. They gave a number of reasons (and many gave more than one) for children participating in the book clubs: child's high interest in books (103 responses); parental priority (82 responses); having the funds (81 responses); good readers (74 responses); parental involvement (10 responses); other (prices are low, selections attract children, students like to receive books, students want to build a series collection, 24 responses). Teachers also gave a number of reasons why children didn't participate: not having the funds (131 responses); parental low priority (79 responses); other (children buy books elsewhere, already have a large collection of book club books from siblings, use the school and public library, don't like the selections, lose order forms or forget to bring in the money; 20 responses); and, finally, being poor readers (17 responses).

Does book club participation change over the course of the year, and over the course of years? Of the 176 teachers who responded to this question, 29% said that participation started strong at the beginning of the year, then tapered off; 26% said that participation had its ups and downs, depending on selections; 6% said it was seasonal, with increases at Christmas; 8% said that participation gets better as the year increases; and 30% said participation was stable across the year. Of those who responded to the question about change across the past few years (118 teachers responded to this question—many said they had either changed grades, or had nothing to compare this year to), 47% said that this year was pretty much the same as previous years; 28% said participation was down compared to previous years; and 24% said participation was up from previous years.

We asked several questions relating to the language arts program, and how book clubs were incorporated into the regular classroom. We started off by asking about teachers' familiarity with children's literature, and then went on to ask about their approach to language arts, and about the role of book clubs in the language arts program.

How did teachers regard their knowledge of literature? Of the 190 teachers who responded to this question, 65% said they had a good working knowledge; 26% said their knowledge was extensive; 8% said their knowledge was not very extensive; and 1% said they didn't keep up with children's literature.

What approach to language arts do they use? Of the 188 teachers who responded to this question, 2% said they used a basal reading series exclusively; 39% said they used a basal reading series, supplemented by trade books; 24% said they used an equal mixture of basal readers and trade books; 18% said they used trade books, supplemented by basals; and 18% said they used trade books only (no basal reader). Of the 142 who responded to the question about whether they used a theme-centered approach, 47% said they did all or most of the time; 32% said they sometimes did; and 21% said they rarely or never used themes. Finally, 35% said book clubs were completely separate from the program (in other words, the book club books played no role in the classroom literacy program, they were basically for home reading); 48% of the teachers said that the book clubs were loosely connected to the language arts program (book club books supplied some of the books for the classroom library, were used for independent reading, projects, book reports, and guided reading in the classroom—in other words, students could use book club books for classroom projects); and 16% said they were an integral part (book club books provided the bulk of the classroom reading material). In other words, 65% of the teachers reported that book clubs were either loosely connected or an integral part of their language arts instruction. From an analysis of the comments made by teachers to explain what they meant by the terms "completely separate," "loosely connected," and "an integral part," it is clear that "loosely connected" is much closer to an "integral part" than it is to "completely separate."

We also asked teachers about how they followed up their students' reading of book club books, if at all. One hundred eighty-three teachers responded to this question. The responses were as follows: Only if the book is used for a classroom reading activity (76); No follow-up, intentionally so (64); Projects (43); Book conferences (15). It is clear from the responses that rarely if ever were students required to follow up their reading of a book club book with any activity; however, if a child chose to use a book club book for a classroom project or requirement (e.g., a book conference, book report, or other assignment), he or she was generally free to do so.

We asked a series of questions about how teachers presented the book clubs to parents and students at the beginning of the year, and how they introduced each month's selections. What we wanted to know was what kind of messages teachers sent to parents and to students about participation in the book clubs, and what kinds of guidance they gave students as they looked over the offerings.

How do teachers communicate with parents and students at the beginning of the year, and to what extent do

they endorse the book clubs? One hundred-forty teachers responded to the question about how they communicate with parents. Responses were evenly divided between sending a letter home explaining the book clubs (60) and explaining the book clubs at Open House (60). Twenty-two teachers did nothing (assuming that parents already knew about the book clubs), and 16 did something else (mostly just sent the order forms home). Of the 121 teachers who responded to the question of the extent to which they endorse book clubs with parents, 47% said they were noncommittal with parents; 32% said they endorsed the book clubs; and 21% said they enthusiastically endorsed them. As far as students were concerned, 80% of the 176 teachers who responded to the question about how they introduced book clubs to students said that they talked with students about the book clubs; 17% said nothing to the students because they assumed they already knew; and 3% used other techniques. As far as endorsing the book clubs with students, 49% of the 123 teachers who responded to this question said they enthusiastically endorsed the clubs with students; 31% endorsed them; and 20% were noncommittal about them. It would appear that teachers introduce book clubs to parents and students in similar ways (by talking about them face-to-face or sending home a letter of explanation) but endorse the book clubs in dissimilar ways, being mostly noncommittal with the parents, and mostly enthusiastic with the students.

How do teachers introduce the monthly book club selections? One hundred eighty-two teachers responded to this question. Responses were as follows: Hand out order forms, mention a few selections (73); Go through the selections in detail (59); Just hand out the order forms, without any discussion (49); Allow students time to discuss their selections (45); Talk with individual students about their selections (18); Some other approach (3).

Do teachers encourage or discourage particular selections? Seventy-three teachers said that they encouraged particular selections (such as books the teacher likes, or has used in class, or that ties in with a class theme; classics; certain authors; Caldecott and Newbery winners; easy or challenging books, depending on the students); 19 said they discouraged certain items (such as "fad" books, books with obvious commercial ties, books about TV/movie stars, posters, and stickers).

What do teachers think is their role in helping children select items? Of the 127 teachers who responded to this question, 8% said their role was very important; 56% said their role was somewhat important; and 36% said their role was unimportant.

Do teachers notice any patterns in the choices of books and other materials their students choose from the book clubs? Of the 172 teachers who responded to this question, 36 didn't notice any patterns. Of the 136 who did, their responses were as varied as the book club selections. About the only generalization that could be made was that teachers thought that boys preferred sports books and science books, while the girls preferred novels and series books (e.g., Baby-sitter books), but even this is not a strong finding.

What do teachers like about the book clubs, and what are their concerns? We asked teachers to tell us about

the features of the book clubs they liked the most, and those they had concerns about. One hundred-ninety teachers responded to the question of what they liked best. Responses were as follows: Good prices (139); Bonuses for teachers (129); Good selection of books (129); Ease of ordering, including prompt resolution of difficulties (57); Teacher guides (22).

One hundred-ninety teachers responded to the question about concerns. Their responses were as follows: No concerns (76); Selection, mostly focused on what teachers called "fad" materials and "junk" (46); Ordering, mostly focused on the time it takes to fill out the orders, but also on the time it takes for orders to arrive (37); Price, focused on what is perceived as rising prices, and prices that while low are still beyond the reach of many students (15); Teacher bonuses, focused on the large number of points it takes to get the bonuses (10); Teacher guides, which are not regarded as useful (7).

What do teachers think are the unique contributions of book clubs? Finally, we asked teachers what they thought were the unique contributions that book clubs made to their students' literacy development. One hundred seventy-five teachers responded to this question. Their responses were as follows: Children owning the books (131); Building a personal collection at a reasonable cost (105); Supplying books for the classroom program (97); Students read more, gain reading skills (92); Students developing responsibility for their own reading (74); Encouraging pleasure reading (11). An analysis of the many comments teachers made on this question reveals that they also feel that book clubs turn children on to reading, expose them to many kinds of books, in some cases provide students with their only source for books, and make books available that wouldn't otherwise be, where access to book stores or public libraries is difficult.

Summary of Teachers' Views

We came into this study without any idea about what teachers thought about the book clubs, nor how they used them in their language arts programs. The first thing we discovered was that without exception, teachers are free to use book clubs, and overwhelmingly make their own choice of club. Although very few of our respondents chose not to use a book club in their classroom (a number that almost certainly is larger in the population as a whole than in our sample, given the voluntary nature of our sampling techniques), those who did used them on a regular basis. Indeed, we were surprised to learn how many teachers used more than one club (39% used one club only; 37% used two clubs; 26% used three or more clubs). Just as teachers were free to use book clubs or not, they in turn insisted that children were free to use them. Not a single teacher required any child to participate, and while about half the teachers encouraged children to participate, they all insisted that participation was entirely voluntary. Nor did teachers place any restrictions of their own on what children purchased, leaving the choice to the children and their parents.

Teachers' insights on why children participate or not are particularly interesting. Clearly, children's interest in reading and parental support are the major reasons why children participate, while lack of funds and parents' lack of support are the major reasons why children don't participate. Being a good reader is a factor in whether children

participate, but being a poor reader is not a significant factor in children not participating. What this says to us is that book clubs are clearly perceived by teachers as being accessible to readers of all abilities; what seems to facilitate children's participation is their being interested in books and having parental support, and what seems to inhibit participation is not having the funds and lack of parental support.

We discovered no patterns of book club usage over the year, or across the years. Whether book club usage goes up or down or stays the same seems to depend on local conditions that when viewed as a whole cancel each other out. It did seem to us, however, that participation over major holidays such as Christmas did increase significantly.

How teachers use book clubs in their regular classroom instruction was especially interesting. First, our findings about the numbers of teachers using basals only, basals in combination with trade books, and trade books only contradicts some previous findings on this topic (e.g., Shannon, 1983), but confirms more recent surveys about what teachers use in their language arts programs (Canney & Neuenfeldt, 1992; quoted in Allington, 1992). While our findings confirm the growing trend away from basal readers towards a combination of basals and trade books, more importantly they reveal the extensive use of book clubs in supplying classrooms with trade books needed for these increasingly literature-based programs. Teachers seem to be using book clubs in two ways: by encouraging students to purchase books of their own, and then allowing them to use them for classroom purposes (for independent reading, for book reports, for book conferences, and the like); and by purchasing book club books, either directly or through bonuses, for use in the classroom (sets of novels for guided reading, supplying a classroom library for independent reading, and so on). Just as teachers are in transition from a purely basal approach to language arts, so, too, are they in transition from keeping the book club completely separate from the classroom (i.e., using it to supply out-of-school reading only), towards using it to supply children with books they can read within the classroom, to eventually using the club to supply either a major portion or even all of the books for a literature-based curriculum. We talked to teachers at all stages of this transition, but it is clear from our study that book clubs are playing a major role in meeting the demand for trade books in the elementary language arts curriculum. Teachers mentioned the low cost of book club books as one of the best features of the clubs, and many teachers are using more than one book club in their classroom (despite the increased paperwork involved). We wonder if, in these recessionary times, teachers have found the book clubs to be outstanding value for money in supplying them with the trade books they need for their programs. They have to shop around the clubs to find all the books they need, but for most of them the benefits outweigh the administrative difficulties. In one school where we conducted interviews, there was a coordinated effort by the teachers K-6 to use the book clubs to build up a school-wide collection of trade books for the language arts curriculum. Some of the teachers were a little concerned about the lengths to which their colleagues went to encourage participation "for the cause," but obviously these teachers fully understood the value of book clubs in supplying trade books for the classrooms.

In terms of what teachers liked about the clubs, and what concerns they had, clearly teachers see the affordability of books as a major benefit, but they have mixed feelings about what is offered in the monthly selections. What they

like is the range of books, including award-winning books and books on a wide range of topics that are obviously at the right reading level for their students. What they don't like are the books based on TV shows or movies or cartoons, and some of the "shallower" series books (what some teachers referred to as "fad" books), and they don't like the stickers and the "cutesy" posters. On the other hand, most teachers accepted these items as a necessary part of doing business with the book clubs, and several teachers pointed out that anything that invited children into reading was better than their watching TV or not reading at all. We noticed that many teachers tried to steer children away from the "fad" books and the stickers (although they never prohibited children from ordering these items); parents were more likely to prohibit children from buying them—much to the chagrin of their offspring—or make them buy these items with their own money). We thought that teachers would make a bigger fuss about the order forms and collecting the money, but this was not the case. Collecting the money was barely mentioned by teachers, and the time-consuming task of filling out the orders was not an expressed concern of many teachers. We did, however, interview some teachers whose school districts prohibited them from collecting the money, and in one case, a teacher who wanted to participate in the book clubs did not do so because there were no parent volunteers available to handle the orders. What struck us was how positive teachers were about both the quality and breadth of the selections, and how few complaints they had about the book clubs. Even the small number of complaints about lost and mixed-up orders were balanced by compliments about how quickly problems were resolved.

Finally, we were not sure whether teachers really had thought about the role that book club books played in their students' literacy development. In our original proposal, we stated that it would be impossible to make any direct links between book club participation and the growth of children's literacy, because there are so many interacting factors that contribute to a child's literacy development. What our study indicates (and this is confirmed by the closer observations in Study 2) is that from the teachers' perspective, book clubs contribute to students' literacy development in at least two ways. For those children who participate in the book clubs (about 60%), teachers feel that the major value of this participation lies in the ownership of books, the building of a personal collection of books, greater amounts of reading (which contribute to the development of reading skills), and the encouragement of pleasure reading. But what may be more important, from the teachers' perspective, is that book clubs are supplying the classroom with large numbers of books (either directly, or through children's' purchases) and are thus promoting the literacy development of all children in the class, not just those who participate in the book clubs. The fact that being a poor reader does not inhibit a child's participation in the book clubs (although being poor apparently does), those children who most need practice in reading do not appear to be excluded from book club reading, at least not on the basis of their reading ability. And many teachers told us that they use their bonus points and free books to supply impoverished children with books (in one case, the teacher said she let her really poor children fill in the order just the same as everyone else in the room, so as not to embarrass these children in front of the others, but she paid for their orders). None of the teachers articulated how the book clubs directly impacted children's literacy development, but it is clear from the analysis of the data that there are both direct influences (i.e., children, especially poorer readers, selecting and reading many trade books on their own), and indirect influences (i.e., teachers using large numbers of trade books from the book clubs to use in their reading programs) on children's growth. While it is true that teachers could supply their classrooms with books from

book stores and from school and public libraries, the fact that book clubs put trade books into the hands of students and teachers at highly discounted prices offers substantial advantages, and in cases where school libraries are poorly stocked, and book stores are at a great distance from children's homes (as many teachers and parents from rural areas reported to us), book clubs become essential sources of books for students and classrooms.

Students' Views of and Experiences With School Book Clubs

Two hundred twenty-four students participated in Study 1. All the students were interviewed face-to-face, in their own schools. From the information they gave us about themselves and what we obtained from their schools, we learned the following:

- 61% regarded themselves as good readers; 32% regarded themselves as average or beginning readers; 7% regarded themselves as poor readers
- 59% said they love to read; 6% said they like reading; 27% said they like reading sometimes; and 4% said they don't like reading
- their average class size is 25 (class size in grades K-5 is 24; grades 6-8 is 26)[3]
- their average school size is 615 pupils (540, K-5; 750, 6-8);
- 40% of their schools are suburban; 36% urban; 24% rural
- 11% of their schools are in wealthy communities; 31% in relatively wealthy communities; 18% in communities of average wealth; 24% in relatively poor communities; 8% in poor communities; 8% in mixed wealth communities
- 21 respondents were Kindergarten students; 27, 1st grade; 22, 2nd grade; 26, 3rd grade; 25, 4th grade; 28, 5th grade; 31, 6th grade; 24, 7th grade; 19, 8th grade

We first asked students a number of questions about their participation in the book clubs: whether they participated, what clubs they ordered from, how much and what kinds of items.

Of the 224 students we interviewed, 194 (87%) said they participated in one book club or another. Obviously, this figure means that our sample of students is skewed towards those that participate (earlier, we learned from teachers

3 3. The disparity between the class sizes reported by the students and those reported by the teachers is due to that fact that students generally reported the size of their homerooms, while teachers reported the size of their combined classes (applies to departmentalized grades only).

that just under 60% of their students participated). Accordingly, the results of the student interviews have to be seen as views of students who participate in book clubs. We know something about why students do not participate, as told by themselves—as opposed to by their teachers—but this is based on very few student accounts, and so needs to be regarded as a tentative finding. Students do not participate for one or more of these reasons: their teacher has decided not to hand out order forms; their parents don't want them to (even though they do); they don't have the resources to participate; they obtain their books from other sources (book fairs, bookstores, libraries); or they simply don't want to participate (and neither their parents nor their teacher is insisting that they do).

Which book clubs did students subscribe to? An analysis of the distribution of book clubs that students said they ordered from is displayed below:

Scholastic Firefly	2
Scholastic Seesaw	43
Scholastic Lucky	20
Scholastic Arrow	45
Scholastic Tab	33
Troll 1	7
Troll 2	14
Troll 3	34
Troll 4	1
Trumpet (EY)	17
Trumpet (PY)	14
Trumpet (MY)	11
Weekly Reader	11
Discovering	3
Golden	1

What this analysis reveals is not the relative popularity of the various clubs among students—teachers, not children, choose the clubs—but simply that the students' views apply across the full range of school book clubs.

How often do students order from the book clubs? Of the 193 students who responded to this question, 68% order every month, or nearly every month; 10% order every two months; 10% order when there's a specific selection they want; 3% order either rarely or don't know how often they order. (These percentages are not easy to interpret, because the frequency with which students order is entirely dependent on how often the teachers hand out forms.)

What do students order from the book clubs? One hundred ninety-four students responded to this question. Their responses are as follows: Books (193); Posters (65); Stickers (62); Calendars (8); Videos (3); Audio Cassettes (2); Computer software (6); Other (10).

How many items do students purchase per order? We asked separate questions about books and miscellaneous items. One hundred fifty-six students responded to the two questions about how many books, and how many other items they ordered. Their responses: 1-2 books (37%); 2-3 books (15%); 3-4 books (28%); More than 4 (20%). Responses to miscellaneous items: None (59%); 1-2 items (30%); 2-3 items (0%); 3-4 (>1%); Not very often (10%).

Are restrictions placed on students with respect to their orders? We asked students whether they were allowed to select anything they wanted, or if their parents put any restrictions on the selections they made. Of the 192 students who responded to this question, 71% said they could order anything; 5% said they could order anything within reason; 5% said they could order anything but specific books (usually "fad" books); 5% said they could order anything but stickers or posters; 4% said their parents chose the books for them (mostly Kindergarten students); and 8% said they weren't allowed to select anything they wanted, but couldn't articulate what they weren't allowed to select. We asked if there were any dollar limits set on their orders. Of the 191 students who answered this question, 44% said they had no dollar limit; 7% said they had no limit, but beyond a certain amount, they had to use their own money; 13% were limited to $1 or less; 5% to $3 or less; 15% to $5 or less; 12% to $10 or less; 1% to $20 or less; 3% knew they were limited but didn't know how much.

What kind of guidance are students given by parents or teachers in selecting from the book clubs? Of the 193 students who responded to these questions, 30% said that their parents always went through the order list with them; 21% said their parents just checked their final selection; 23% said their parents left the selection entirely up to them

(especially true of students in the upper grades); 19% said that their parents just gave them assistance when they needed it; and 2% said their parents always chose for them (all kindergartners). Eighty percent said their teachers left the selections entirely up to them; 10% said their teacher always went through the order form with them; 6% said their teacher gave assistance when they needed it; 4% said their teacher just checked their final selection.

What were students' favorite items from the book clubs? This was an open-ended question, and as might be expected, the students' responses covered the full range of interests, topics, genres, and authors. Adventure books are obviously popular, as are mysteries, series books (especially the Boxcar Children, Baby-sitters, American Girls Collection, Nancy Drew mysteries), animal stories, Clifford series, informational books (especially about sports), and humorous books. Among the most frequently mentioned authors were: Beverly Cleary, Patricia Reilly Giff, Bruce Coville, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Judy Blume, R. L. Stine, Dr. Seuss, and Roald Dahl. Miscellaneous items such as posters, stickers, baseball card collections, and kits also featured prominently in students' lists. With a few notable exceptions, students picked more popular genres, titles, and authors; but there were students whose favorite books were award-winners, chapter books ("The longer the better"), books with quests, and books by authors such as Madeleine L'Engle, Gary Paulsen, and James Herriott.

What did students like about the book clubs, and what were their concerns? 180 students responded to these questions. What students liked most was the selection of books (87), followed by prices (46), and ease of ordering (25). Students also mentioned summaries of books (10) and bonuses for students (8) as benefits. When we examined the comments students made about what they liked, we found that many of them focused on the ease of ordering, and on the convenience of getting them through the mail. They also liked the variety of books offered.

Most of the students had no concerns about the book clubs (107), some had concerns about the selection of books (31), and a similar number had concerns about ordering (32); prices were of concern to a very small number (5). When we examined the comments students made about their concerns, they seemed to focus mostly on the length of time it took to get their orders back, and on the narrowness of the selections ("not enough new stuff in the book club"; "Many of the books on the list are too easy for me"; "Most books are too hard for kids my age"; "ought to be more books, less stickers and stuff").

For students, what's special about book clubs? Finally, we asked students about what stood out for them about the book clubs, what made them special and different from other kinds of reading they did. One hundred and eighty-six students responded to this question. Owning the books was the most frequent response (114), followed by: Other (71); Don't have to return the books, unlike library books (60); Can build a personal collection of books at low cost (57); I read more, and develop reading skills (59); Can swap books with my friends (30); Don't know (18). The 71 responses coded under "Other" are varied, but a number of reasons why students think book clubs are special came up several times. One is that many of the books teach children about various things, such as baby-sitting (we presume not from the baby-sitter series!), about peers ("I've learned that you don't always have to do what others, like classmates, tell you--I learned this from a book club book"; "I can relate to the situations in the books I read"), about choosing books, about topics not covered in school. Another is that once a child owns a book, he or she can read it over and over again, and many of the students we interviewed said that's what they did. Another is that the book clubs have books that aren't in the library, or are newer than the library books. Many students are benefiting from the collections of books built up by their elder siblings, or are in the process of building up a collection to pass on to younger members of the family, although owning the books is apparently very important ("I just like to have my own books so that my little sister can't touch them"). One benefit of owning the books, in addition to not having to return them, is the absence of fear that they might be lost or defaced ("You can write personal stuff in them and no one will know...you can mess them up if you want to"). A number of students especially liked the fact that book clubs narrowed down the selections to a manageable number, in contrast to rows of shelves of books in the library ("The library has more books, but book clubs have more of what you want to read").

Summary of Students' Views

One measure of how book clubs are targeted directly toward students is that in general their comments about book clubs were much more detailed, and above grade 2, more elaborate than either their teachers or parents. Almost all the students we interviewed were participants in book clubs, and the majority of them ordered regularly: they don't represent nonparticipants, and so we have a much better idea of why students do participate than why they don't. But we can draw some conclusions about the students we interviewed.

One is that they very much enjoy ordering and receiving books and other material from the clubs, and their

complaints about the clubs indicate not dissatisfaction with them, but frustration that books don't arrive sooner and that there aren't more books available. Students talked about the excitement of books arriving in the classroom (and of the occasional disappointment when the order got mixed up and the books they ordered didn't come): interestingly, many parents told us about the same excitement when they were in school.

Another is that the book clubs appear to have judged students' book-reading interests very well, and offer them books on topics they enjoy, at reading levels they generally find appropriate (we wonder if the occasional mismatches have more to do with teachers using inappropriate levels of the book clubs than inappropriate reading levels of books within a club). As will be seen later, in the analysis of the offerings, there is enormous variety in topics, genres, and authors in the selections, and the students obviously understand and appreciate this variety.

The students we interviewed overwhelmingly ordered books from the book clubs; miscellaneous items such as stickers, and posters represent a small fraction of what is available to students, and it represents a small fraction of what they order. For example, students reported purchasing over three times as many books as miscellaneous items; nearly 60% of the students reported ordering no miscellaneous items at all.

Students appear generally to have very few limits placed on them with respect to what they purchase from the book clubs and what they spend (although many students' assessment of their book club budget departs considerably from what their parents told us), and what limits are placed are by parents, not teachers. In fact, the vast majority of students reported that teachers left the selection entirely up to them.

For students who participate in book clubs, the book clubs have a special place in their lives, offering them inexpensive books on topics they are interested in, narrowing down the choice to a manageable number, and allowing them to build up sizable personal collections of books. Owning the books appears to be very important to students, not just because they don't have to be returned (with the attendant fears—very real to students—of losing them, defacing them, or being fined for tardiness), but also because a book that is owned can be read over and over again.

We cannot know, and the students we interviewed offered few direct insights into, exactly what role these

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

book clubs play in their literacy development, but what we have learned from this study suggests a number of possibilities. First, because book clubs offer books that students want to read, and because they offer them in such an attractive manner, even the most reluctant reader is drawn into books via a book club. Evidence from the teacher interviews confirms that being a poor reader is not a hindrance to participation in the book clubs. Thus book clubs offer all children an attractive and nonthreatening invitation to books. The wholly voluntary nature of the book clubs is especially nonthreatening.

Second, the low prices of books offered by the book clubs makes the ownership of a wide range of books accessible to all but the most impoverished reader (and even there, according to many teachers, inability to afford the books can be overcome by creative use of bonuses). Putting books into the hands of students allows a number of things to happen. It encourages reading. It increases book-handling. It offers concrete and real alternatives to television. It doesn't guarantee these will happen, but it creates conditions in which they are more likely to happen.

Third, because book clubs offer only a small selection of books each month, children are invited to consider a hand-picked group of books from which to make individual selections. Since the clubs always offer a wide range of books each month, ranging from classics, to current award-winning books, to popular authors, yes even to "fad" books, children are routinely exposed to possible choices that challenge them beyond their current interests and reading levels. From the interviews with students, it is obvious that many students have already transcended (perhaps run out of) the more popular books, and seek out "meatier" titles. Our analysis of the book club books suggests that students are unlikely to exhaust the possibilities for challenging material, unless they are trapped in a club intended for younger readers (for example, using Scholastic Arrow in a classroom where Scholastic Tab would offer more appropriate choices). School book clubs obviously aren't the only source for challenging books, nor are they the only source for guidance on what to read next (school and public librarians should and do provide this assistance), but they nonetheless do put in front of children an attractive set of offerings that not only draw children in at their own level, but also invite them to try out material that's more challenging. Again, we have no evidence that children do make this progression, at least not over a single year, but the fact that book clubs offer possibilities for more challenging reading makes more challenging reading possible.

We do have some indications from the students themselves that they use their book club reading to help themselves develop as readers. Not only do many of them explicitly refer to this as one of the things that's special about book clubs, but it is also clear from the teachers' interviews that many children are using book club books (either from the classroom collections, or from individual purchases) in the regular classroom literacy program. Thus we can say that while there is no direct evidence of the contribution of book club reading to children's literacy development, there is strong indirect evidence, namely that book clubs are supplying substantial numbers of books that children are reading privately and in school, and from which we presume their literacy development benefits.

Finally, the students do offer some explanations why some of them don't participate in the book clubs. Of the 30 students who said they didn't participate, 7 said they would have liked to but their teacher never handed out forms; 5 said they got their books from a Book Fair; and 7 gave no reasons at all. The rest gave various reasons, including having too many books already (3); parents refusing, even though the child wanted to (2); books come from book store (2); lack of funds (1); orders through a home book club (1); and never did participate (1). We make no generalizations from these responses (teachers gave lack of funds as a major reason why children did not participate, while only one of the students did), but they do demonstrate the variety of reasons why children don't regularly order from the book clubs.

Parents' Views of and Experiences with School Book Clubs

Ninety-nine parents participated in Study 1. Parents were either interviewed face-to-face in the schools where their children attended, or interviewed over the telephone. Seven respondents were parents of Kindergarten students; 10, 1st grade; 10, 2nd grade; 14, 3rd grade; 15, 4th grade; 12, 5th grade; 14, 6th grade; 11, 7th grade; 6, 8th grade. Parents in this sample had an average of just over 2 children.

We asked parents questions about whether book clubs were used in their child's school, and whether their child participated or not. Eighty-five of the children of these parents were offered the chance to participate in book clubs in their school, while 14 were not. Eighty of the 85 children did in fact participate (60 participated every month or nearly every month; 10 participated when there was a specific selection; 9 participated every other month; and 1 parent didn't know how often her child participated). We asked parents how much their child liked or disliked partici-

pating. Fifty-eight said their child loved it; 9 said their child liked it; 7 said their child's interest waxed and waned; 6 said their child expressed no opinion one way or the other; none said they disliked it.

We asked parents about the controls they placed on their children's selections. Some parents placed controls on the number of books ordered, others on the amount of money spent per order, and some on the kinds of materials ordered. Seventeen parents (22%) placed no limits on the dollar amounts their children spent, while 20 parents (25%) placed some control over the dollar amounts; 9 parents (11%) restricted their children's orders to under $10; 4 (5%) restricted them to under $5. Fourteen parents (18%) placed restrictions on the number of books their children could order. Twenty-nine parents (37%) placed some restrictions on the selections (usually limiting or prohibiting particular items such as stickers, posters, or computer software); of the rest, 12 (15%) placed no restrictions on selections, or advised their children but left the final choice to them.

We asked parents about their role in helping their child select items from the order forms. Of the 68 who answered this question, 31 (46%) said they always go through the list with the child; 6 (9%) gave assistance only when the child asked for it; 19 (28%) just checked the child's final selection; and 12 (18%) left the selection entirely up to the child. As we noted earlier, parents of younger children tended to participate more fully in helping their children select items; as the children get older, parents intervene less (especially in the upper grades, where children frequently use their own money to buy from the book clubs).

We asked parents what they felt were the book clubs' strengths, and what concerns they had. Seventy-nine parents responded to these questions. Their responses were as follows: Price (64); Selection (61); Ordering (14); Other (13). Affordability is one of the book clubs' great strengths, according to the parents—"I feel confident that if a child orders, it won't be too expensive"; "price is the best feature"; "book clubs are inexpensive compared to the bookstores"; "my child can buy 2-3 books for the price of one in the bookstore." Parents also praise the good mixture of books— "selections for everyone: current events, sports, Caldecott, Newbery"; "books are grade and age appropriate." Almost all those who commented on ordering used the same word—convenience—to describe what they liked about the book clubs: "On-schedule delivery, dependable"; "convenience is wonderful." Among the other reasons given by parents include bonuses for students, bonuses for teachers, the quality of books, book summaries, computer software,

and nonfiction books.

The book clubs posed no concerns for 38 of the 78 parents. Of those who had concerns, most (22) found fault with the selections: most complained about too many "fad" books, stickers, videos, posters, and the like. Several parents also thought there were too few books directed to a minority audience, or with minority representation. Some thought there were too many violent books, and disliked books on ghosts, witches, and demonic topics. A few parents wished that selections were repeated more frequently. No complaints were raised about ordering.

We asked parents to tell us if they noticed any patterns in their children's choices of reading material from the book clubs. Of the 78 responding parents, 16 (21%) didn't notice any patterns, but there was no pattern in the rest of the responses. The children of these parents had reading interests that ran the gamut from stickers and posters to award-winning books, from joke-books to historical fiction, and from TV and movie books to thrillers and mysteries.

Finally, we asked parents what they thought book clubs contributed to their children's literacy, and for those parents with several children, to reflect more broadly on their book club experiences over several years. Their responses were quite varied. Parents pointed to the value of children building a collection of books at low cost, of owning books, of reading more because they had more books to read. But they also emphasized the value of book clubs to literacy at home, talking about creating collections of books—home libraries—to pass down from one family member to another, about reading books to younger members of the family or with parents, and about the value of having an alternative to television: "Book clubs enable us to have a large volume of books to choose from. My kids don't get bored with their reading choices and seem to read more." Several parents commented directly on the benefits of reading book club books (but not exclusively these books) on children's reading skills—"The more you read, the more you learn. My child buys a lot of books she needs to read"; "Book club books expose my child to new vocabulary."

Parents' reflections on the book clubs over time were also quite varied. One parent talked at length about her experiences:

> After 12 years of buying books from book clubs, I see our book shelves stuffed with fun, but low inspirational books. I would prefer the children borrow books from the library, and we would spend

> the same dollar amount on a nice set of hardback children's literature that would be worth keeping and handing down. Though I'm not 100% pro book clubs, I will admit that the format and presentation of books gets kids excited about reading. The "junk" that they sometimes read does stimulate and excite them, which I believe increases reading speed and comprehension. The book clubs do not teach reading skills, but I think they reinforce and improve current reading levels.

Another parent said: "We have accumulated a lot of books. They generate a lot of appeal for books for the children. They become excited when they find favorites (authors, Newbery books)." Another commented: "As long as Trisha reads, the others in the family get the message that reading is something than can be enjoyable. Also, I keep the books around for the younger girls." Another: "Most of the books in my children's shelves are book club books—we think book club books are great." Several parents reminisced about getting book club books when they were children, and were pleased that their children were able to participate.

Summary of Parents' Views

We were not able to interview parents in either the numbers nor in the same face-to-face manner that characterized our interviews with students and most of the teachers, and so the data on parents' views of book clubs is somewhat more tentative than that from the other respondents. Nonetheless, we think we can draw some conclusions from our interviews with parents.

Parents have a different perspective on book clubs than either teachers or students. They aren't responsible for selecting the book clubs used in their child's classroom (in several instances, parents complained about classrooms in which their children were not able to participate in book clubs, which upset them greatly), and generally teachers don't communicate much with them about the book clubs, except at the beginning of the year. Parents may not know it, but teachers usually leave the selections entirely up to the child and the parent. Parents, then, are left with the major responsibility of guiding their children's choices, and establishing ground rules for what gets ordered and what doesn't, and how much is allowed to be spent. This isn't easy when all the promotional materials go to the teacher. The parent has, in most instances, to rely on the same information in the order form as the child (although, in fairness, we did interview several teachers who routinely go through the order forms, and send letters home with the children, making

recommendations to parents).

From the interviews, it is clear that most parents think of the book clubs very favorably, and what they like most about them is how easy it is to acquire good books and other material for their children, at very competitive prices. While they frown on what they consider to be inappropriate material (e.g., the "fad" books), many parents find it quite easy to establish ground rules that put these items "off-limits" to their children. Other parents view the selection process in the same way as they view television, namely that children have to learn how to make responsible decisions, and the only way to do that is to give them choices and let them understand the consequences (in other words, let them buy junk, and soon enough they'll see that the junk has no lasting value, and they'll steer themselves away from it). A few parents have much stricter views (and perhaps greater resources), and simply avoid the book clubs, instead buying what they need from bookstores, or borrowing from libraries. Several parents don't participate in the book clubs, preferring instead to purchase books at school book fairs, where they can preview the books they buy for their children.

Because book club books are largely intended for out-of-school reading (although, as we discussed earlier, this is changing), and because most parents participate directly in the ordering process, parents have a different perspective on the book clubs than teachers. What we found was that parents thought less about how the book clubs developed their child's literacy, and more about how the book clubs helped provide recreational books for their children, and how they helped build home libraries for their children. As one parent put it: "I hope Katie's interest in books picks up, but I'm not rushing her. When she decides to read, the books will be there." Parents' concerns about the quality of the offerings, about prices, and about ordering were very similar to those expressed by the teachers and the students. However, parents do not generally have access to the offerings of all the clubs, and their criticisms might be tempered somewhat were they to study the full range of offerings of all levels of each of the clubs (see Study 3 below). Also, parents are in a much stronger position to control what their children buy, or even whether their child participates in the book club in the first place. Given the teachers' commitment to the voluntary nature of participation, there is no pressure on children to participate, and only one parent in the sample raised this issue (she felt there was peer pressure to order).

In general, parents are well pleased that their children have the opportunity to participate in book clubs, and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

they see the book clubs as a major source for building collections of books for the home, for children to read for pleasure.

Study 2: Case Studies on School Book Club Usage

In this study, we examined the contributions of school book clubs in the literacy development of 12 children in six elementary school classrooms over a period of one year. Specifically, we tracked each student's book club selections and examined a sampling of the other literacy experiences they had at home and school. We held conversations with each child about the books and other materials they were reading. We observed the ways in which the teachers of these students incorporated school book clubs into their language arts programs, and we held interviews with parents about their opinions of book club materials and their use. The schools in this study were different from those in Study 1.

Subjects

The students observed were evenly distributed among schools in three types of settings: urban, rural, and suburban in upstate New York and in New Jersey (see Table 3). In addition to sampling varied geographic settings, two different kinds of classroom environments were examined. Six students were in classrooms where a literature-based curriculum was predominant. In literature-based classrooms, the teaching of reading is integrated into a total language arts program in which children are regularly exposed to a wide variety of literature. Much of that literature is in the form of full-length, trade (library) books. The remaining six students were in basal-oriented classrooms. In these classrooms, a basal reading program provides the basis for reading instruction. Trade books play a supplementary role and are primarily restricted to children's voluntary reading.

Six of the students were characterized as better readers by their teachers, the others as poorer readers. Students were selected by their teachers, who asked them if they wished to participate. The better readers were not necessarily the best readers in the class, nor were the poorer readers the worst, as determined by the previous year's reading test scores. Seven females and five males participated.

Since book clubs are used differently across grade levels, classrooms at three different grade levels were

Table 3
Design for Study 2

Grade	Basal-based program	Literature-based program
1	2 students NY Rural	2 students NJ Suburban
3	2 students NJ Urban	2 students NY Rural
5	2 students NY Suburban	2 students NJ Urban

sampled: 1st grade, representing early primary; 3rd grade, representing middle elementary; and 5th grade, representing upper elementary. Preliminary inquiries revealed that book clubs are commonly used in the primary and elementary grades, but infrequently in junior and senior high schools. Hence, the decision, in this study, to limit focus to 1st, 3rd, and 5th grade classrooms.

Data Collection

At the outset of the study, the teachers and parents of each of the target students were interviewed in addition to the students themselves. Their views about book clubs and the role of book clubs in the language arts program were elicited. Throughout the year, book club orders were tracked for all of the focus students. At selected periods, interviews were scheduled around book order time. These interviews focused on the books the students had read and their opinions about their reading experiences. During the interview periods, teachers kept track of the titles of all the books they read to students and those books read independently by the focus students at home and at school. Parents also kept track of their children's reading experiences.

Twice during the year, each child was shadowed. That is, a researcher spent an entire school day with the student, attending all classes and keeping a log of all of the child's activities. In addition, each classroom was observed to record the techniques the teacher used when passing out book club order forms and again when book club books were distributed.

Findings, Study 2

The findings for Study 2 are divided into two parts: (1) selected summaries of descriptive data, based on observations and interviews; and (2) summaries of findings, according to the research questions.

(1) Summary descriptions of selected subjects and the contexts in which they were observed, based on our observations and interviews

Grade 1

School: Name - B.

Community Type- Suburban

Curriculum - Literature Based

Number of Students - 500

Teacher: Ms. F.

Class size 22

Students: C.G. - girl, poorer reader K.M. - girl, better reader

Profile, Teacher, Ms. F. Ms. F. has been teaching for 15 years. She has taught 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 1st grades. The choice of book clubs used in her classroom is totally up to her. Order forms are passed out every four or five weeks. Although she does not specifically encourage the students to order from the clubs, she encourages them to read. She has no rules regarding the participation in the book clubs. She does review the order forms with the students, when they are passed out. Ms. F. reported that approximately 15 out of 20 children regularly participate each year. According to Ms. F., children like to participate because they can choose books on their own. She feels that the main reason some children do not participate is financial.

To introduce the book clubs, Ms. F. seats the children in a circle and passes out the flyers. Children are encouraged to indicate a book in which they are interested. In response, Ms. F. talks about the book, asks if anybody else has read it, and whether or not they liked it. She also makes recommendations of books to the students. If a large number of children order the same book, she is likely to order several additional copies so that the class can read the book as a whole. She likes the fact that the book clubs are at the right levels for her students, and that they tell the number of pages and whether or not it is an easy to read book. She feels the prices encourage the students to buy more

books. Although the children are still emerging as readers at this age, Ms. F. feels they can recognize an author's name or look at the picture in the flyer to determine whether or not a book appeals to them.

Ms. F. feels that her literature-based program exposes the children to many books. The book clubs support her program by encouraging reading. Her students are apt to pick up books to read when they have a choice of activities.

Ms. F's class ordered 153 books and other items over the course of the year.

Profile, Classroom Practices. Ms. F. uses "Big Books" for reading at different intervals throughout the day. Students are also called upon to read with Ms. F. on a one-to-one basis. There is a great deal of discussion centered on books. Children discuss why they like or do not like a book. Discussion is elicited through questions such as: "How did you feel about this?" and "Why did you feel that it was sad?"

Writing assignments are often related to books read. Students write regularly in journals. There is some cooperative learning with students working together on a projects. In general, Ms. F.'s classroom practice could be characterized as holistic and literature-based.

Profile, Student, C.G. C.G. describes herself as a good reader who likes books. She says she likes to order stickers and books. She also said her mother helped her select and will not let her get a book which is too hard for her. C.G. likes books if they are "funny" or "scary." She appeared to be a little shy in answering questions for the interview.

Profile, Parent of C.G. Mrs. G. is very supportive of C.G. and pleased with the reading program at her school. She and C.G. share books nightly. She likes the idea of obtaining books through the book club, although she regularly purchases books for gifts and on shopping expeditions. She places no restrictions on the type of books she allows C.G. to purchase.

C.G. purchased 18 books and one set of stickers during the year (see Table 4). She had 58 books listed as books to which she was exposed at home and school during the weeks she was tracked. Of these, 33% were available

Table 4
Profile, Book Orders and Book Tracking, C.G.

Month	Book Orders
October	In the Haunted House, What Happens to a Hamburger, Book About...Skeleton, Peanut Butter #50, Happy Halloween Stickers,Very...Jack-0-Lantern, Martin Teacher's Pet
January	Hook: The Storybook
February	Curious George...cake, Home Place
April	Adventures of a Taxi Dog, I'll Fix Anthony, Poor Carl
May	Arnie goes to Camp, I Love Summer and..., See You In Second Grade, Crysta Saves the Magic, Kenny...Little Kickers, School Pack Friends

through school book clubs.

Profile, Student, K.M. K.M. says she likes to read a lot. She likes picture books. She says she buys books every month from the book club. She says she chooses mostly books because she has too many coloring books and with stickers "all you do is wear them for a day and you have to throw them out." She likes books because "you can do so many things with them. You can make presents of them. You can keep them. You can give them to friends." Her mother goes over the book club flyers with her and helps her choose. K.M. also likes to choose books by authors that she knows.

Profile, Parent of K.M. Mrs. M. describes K.M. as a bright and curious child who loves books and stories. She and K.M. read the book order forms together and make decisions together about what will be ordered. Some books are strictly for reading aloud by Mrs. M., others are read together in a "shared" way. The very easy books are read alone, with some help by Mrs. M. She places no fixed limit on the number of books or the amount spent. Mrs. M. likes the book clubs for their convenience and economy. She purchases books at popular book stores at the mall, as well.

Table 5
Profile, Book Club Orders and Book Tracking, K.M.

Month	Book Orders
October	Mouse & The Motorcycle, Sesame St. Dictionary, gift for her cousin)
January	Arthur's Valentine, Fox on the Job, Julius, One Zillion Valentines
February	Alexander Mouse, Chicka..Boom, Dinosaur Day, Snowball War
April	Arnie the New Kid, I'll Fix Anthony, Poor Carl, Zoo Doings
May	Chocolate Moose for Dinner, Crazy Times at Camp Custer , Stupids Have a Ball, Cabbage Coloring book, Frank & Ernest...Ball, Kenny...Little Kickers

K.M. ordered a total of 19 books and one coloring book for the year (see Table 5). 65 books were listed as books to which she was exposed during the weeks in which she was tracked. Of those, 19% were available through school book clubs.

Grade 3

School: Name - NW

Community Type- Rural

Curriculum - Literature Based

Number of students - 252

Teacher: Ms. R

Class size - 22

Students: R.A. - boy, poorer reader

J.S. - girl, better reader

Profile, Teacher, Ms. R. Ms. R. has been teaching for five years. She uses only one book club. She restricts the ordering to four times a year, stating that she is concerned about parents' ability to purchase books each month. She will often point out the least expensive books to the students. She tries to steer the children away from items such as

stickers. Otherwise, she merely encourages them to purchase a book they can read. Last year, about one third of her class participated. She feels that the poorer readers tend to purchase more stickers and posters while the better readers tend to purchase books. When a book is offered that is related to a particular theme they are studying, Ms. R. will bring it to the attention of the children.

Ms. R. pays considerable attention to the ordering process. At the start of the school year, she sets aside some time to go over the order form item by item and talk about the different books that are there to choose from. She mentions every offering and will comment if she thinks the students should not be spending their money on a particular item. She reads the excerpt about the book, if she is familiar with it. If not, she mentions it briefly. After reviewing the entire order form, she allows the children five minutes to talk with each other about what is being offered. The classroom becomes a kind of free-for-all in discussion. When the books arrive, there is a lot of sharing as the students show each other their selections.

Ms. R. likes the variety of different genres offered by the book club she uses, and the fact that they offer Newbery winners, as well as the most recently published books and multicultural titles. She notices that the boys tend to choose sports books, Guinness books, and game books. Girls favor the Baby-sitter series; however, they are more likely than the boys to choose books that are more difficult to read.

The children's inability to judge the difficulty levels of the books in advance is of concern to Ms. R. Sometimes they order books that are much too difficult and they become discouraged. She is also concerned about the commercialization of the clubs. She has very strong feelings about the Alf and Ninja Turtle books, which she maintains contribute nothing toward motivating kids to read.

Insert Table 5

Overall, the book clubs serve an important function in Ms. R's estimation: they offer the children access to many more books than the school library, which is small, has a limited and not very current collection, and tends to buy series books.

Ms. R.'s class ordered 57 books from the book club over the course of the year.

Profile, Classroom Practice. Ms. R's classroom may be characterized as "literature rich." Children are read aloud to on a frequent basis. At times, the reading may be interrupted with open-ended questions. Questions such as the following lead to brief discussions: "What if everything you touched turned to chocolate?" "How would you rate this story on a scale of 1 to 10?" Other forms of engagement with literature include silent reading followed by discussion, teacher-pupil and peer reading conferences. Ms. R sometimes reads silently along with the children. Writing and independent reading are regular activities in this classroom.

Profile, R.A. R.A. is a nine-year-old boy in 3rd grade. He is a very shy child and in the initial interview could not remember any previous book club experiences. He was very tentative in answering questions about his own reading ability and preferences.

Profile, Parent of R.A. According to Mrs. A., R.A. likes to read. R.A. is the youngest of two children. He has a sister in sixth grade. Ms. A. said R.A. participated in the book club last year and ordered at least one book almost every month. Although Mrs. A. places a dollar limit on the amount spent, she thinks that the book club books are a good value and has no concerns. She helps R.A. choose books and discourages selections she thinks are too difficult for him to read. Mrs. A thinks R.A. is more interested in reading a book if he chooses it from the book club. She relates that on the day a book club book arrives, he will tend to read it right away. Ms. A. reads with R.A.. She feels the book club is a good way for the children to build up their own library at home.

R.A. ordered 4 books during the year (see Table 6). During the tracking periods, R.A. was exposed to 54 books; 24% of these were available through the school book clubs.

Profile, Student, J.S. J.S. is an eight-year-old 3rd grader who described herself as liking to read "really hard books." J.S. tries to read every night, usually with her mother. She was able to read before she started school. J.S. says that her parents do not allow her to spend over $5.00 when she orders from the book club. She also belongs to a home mail-order book club. She receives books monthly through that club. J.S. says she does not discuss with her classmates

Table 6
Profile, Book orders and Book Tracking, R.A.

Month	Book Orders
November/ Dec	Alistair in Outer Space, Third Grade is Terrible
April	George's Marvelous . . ., Knots on a Counting Rope

what books she is going to order.

Profile, Parent of J.S. J.S. is the youngest of two children. She has a 10-year-old sister. Mr. S. said J.S. did not start school until she was six. He stated that J.S. is a good reader. She likes to read the newspaper and will always take a book along, if she goes for a ride in the car. Her mother is also an avid reader. Mr. S. says J.S. enjoys participating in the book club. She enjoys going over the order form and selecting the books. J.S. has always been ahead of her class in reading, according to her father. The school has supplemented her reading by giving her "harder" books to read. The family does place a dollar limit on the amount J.S. can spend on the book club books.

J.S. ordered 5 books and 1 other item during the year (see Table 7). During the tracking periods, J.S. was exposed to 66 books, 28% of which were available through the school book clubs.

Table 7
Profile, Book Orders and Book Tracking, J.S.

Month	Book Orders
November/ Dec	Explorer Books: Jungles, Third Grade is Terrible, Happy holiday cards
April	Galimoto, Pee Wee Scouts: Trash Bang, Snaggle Doodles

Grade 5

School: Name - QMS

Community Type- Suburban

Curriculum - Basal Oriented

Number students - 1,000

Class size - 27

Teacher: Ms. H.

Students: A.P. - girl, poorer reader

J.W. - boy, better reader

Profile, Teacher, Ms. H. Ms. H. is very deliberate in her use of book clubs. She rotates among 4 book clubs, looking for materials that highlight special interests and fit into curricular themes under study. She does not necessarily order every month. When her order is low (less than 10), she combines it with that of another teacher. According to Ms. H., too much "junk" such as posters and stickers are offered by the clubs. She observed that poorer readers seemed particularly prone to ordering these materials; better readers ordered more literature. She stresses consumerism, as she and her students compare prices among clubs. School book clubs provide a resource for building the classroom library and for supplementing her collection of programs for her Apple computer.

Ms. H's class ordered 270 books and other items over the course of the year.

Profile, Classroom Practices. Ms. H is the homeroom teacher for A.P. and J.W. Her classroom tends to be somewhat loosely structured. Although most of the day is divided into 20 to 30 minute segments, the children have the freedom to walk about the classroom to complete activities other than those related to what the teacher is doing at the moment. When the book club order forms were distributed, several selections were highlighted by Ms. H.

For one hour each day the children go out to reading instruction in groups to which they have been assigned according to ability. Observations of A.P.'s reading group, undoubtedly one of the lower ones, suggested a program that is heavily skill oriented.

Profile, A.P. Described as a poor student, who rarely reads, A.P. is a ten-year-old girl. According to A.P., reading is "O.K." if the book is interesting. She likes adventure books, "like Garfield." She also orders "a lot of stickers." According to A.P., both her teacher and mother allow her to select any books she wants. Her mother does restrict the amount of money she can spend, however. A.P. prefers playing outside or with Nintendo to reading books. Reading is not a high priority.

Profile, Parent of A.P. In addition to A.P., Mrs. P. has another daughter, age 4. She reported that when her younger daughter, who is in nursery school, brought home a book order form recently, she responded, "You gotta be kidding! This early in life?" A.P. was described as liking the book clubs, as does Mrs. P., who likes the variety of books offered and their easy accessibility through the clubs. Mrs. P. will not let A.P. order a book if she thinks the book is too hard for her. In response to the question, "Do you notice any patterns in A.P.'s selection of books?" Mrs. P. said, "A.P. orders Garfield, joke books, posters, and stickers. She does not order any particular themes or authors." Mrs. P. has cautioned A.P. that she may not order any more books until she started reading some of the books she already has. Mrs. P. reads to her younger child but no longer reads to A.P.

A.P. ordered 16 items for the year. Four were literature books, the rest of the items were posters, a calendar, a folder, joke books, Garfield cartoon books, or popular media books (see Table 8).

During six weeks of tracking, A.P.'s list consisted of 14 items; 88% of those recorded books were from book clubs. She read all of the books which she had ordered from the book clubs. These were primarily Garfield cartoons and popular media books.

In her reading class, Mr. Popper's Penguins was read aloud over a three week period. Another book, Maniac Magee, was also read during the tracking period by the homeroom teacher. Books read aloud by the homeroom teacher had been obtained through the book clubs.

Profile, Student, J.W. J.W. is a ten-year-old, male, better reader. He is in the Gifted and Talented Program. Characterized as a "voracious reader," J.W. reported that he loved to read and that he spent a lot of his free time reading.

Table 8
Profile, Book Orders and Book Tracking, A.P.

Month	Book Orders
September	Garfield's Halloween Adventure (cartoon book), Bingo, Joke book, poster
October	2 cartoon and media books, Something is Drooling
November	Garfield Calendar
November/ December	1 book, 1 media book, Simpsons, 1 Poster
January	1 media book, Addams Family
March	2 Books (1 cartoon)
April	1 book, 1 folder

He likes the book clubs because he can purchase more books for the money. He sometimes uses his money, purchasing as much as $17.00 worth of books in one month. He is also skilled at the computer and does programming.

Profile, Parent of J.W. Mrs. W. reported that she and J.W. usually place a book club order every month. She especially likes the fact that the books were inexpensive compared to the prices in book stores. She was positive about the sense of responsibility fostered, as J.W. selects his own books, and the thrill he gets when the books arrive.

Mrs. W. carefully reads each order form, searching for the "good literature," which she felt was often listed in less obvious places than the newer and "less meaty" offerings. She was also concerned about the length of time it took for the books to come in, after they have been ordered.

Except on special occasions, such as a Newbery Extravaganza offered in September, Mrs. W. restricts the amount her son may spend. She reports that J.W. does have favorite authors he seeks out, especially Lloyd Alexander and Roald Dahl; and that he enjoys fantasy. Although she says she does not exercise censorship control over J.W.'s selections, Mrs. W. acknowledged that she does deter him from ordering such things as stickers and posters. She

Table 9
Profile, Book Orders and Book Tracking, J.W.

Month	Book Orders
September	5 books (Newbery Extravaganza -5 books)
October	5 books
November	4 books
November/ December	7 books (some for gifts)
Holiday	4 books
December	3 books
January	10 books
February	15 books
March	12 books

described J.W. as an avid reader who would read whether or not the book clubs were available. Mrs. W. also has a six-year-old son in first grade, who is also a good reader. She feels the books offered by the book clubs at 1st grade level do not fulfill his needs, particularly because they are too short.

J.W. ordered 65 books for the year (see Table 9). During tracking periods, J.W. was exposed to 29 books; 33% were either selections from or available through the book club. Several were from his home library, which had been purchased through a book club previously. In his reading class, several documents and nonfiction reading (magazines, newspaper articles) were recorded as having been read. Books read aloud by the home room teacher were books that she received through the book clubs.

(2) Summary of findings according to research questions

(1) Do children's book club selections draw from the same range of genres and formats as their classroom and home reading, or do they represent a substantial departure from these other kinds of reading?

Method. Types of books ordered by students were compared with those used for instruction and for voluntary reading in the classroom and at home.

Results. Titles ordered by students look very much like other materials that students, parents, and teachers report they are reading. Many of the titles/authors/genres teachers reported reading aloud were ordered by students from the book clubs. This apparently influences student choice. Poorer readers tended to buy more posters, stickers, and other materials characterized as "junk" by adults. Even so, for most of the poorer students, these items were a small proportion of the entire order. Some examples follow:

K.M., Grade 1, Suburban, Literature based, Better Reader

Number of books read/shared at home and school during tracking periods = 65

Type of books read/shared at home/school during tracking periods = Virtually all were picture books.

Numbers of books ordered by K.M. = 19

Type of books ordered by K.M.: 18 picture books (one dictionary) and one coloring book.

J.C., Grade 3, Rural, Basal, Poorer Reader

Number of books read/shared at home and school during tracking periods = 68

Number of books ordered by J.C. = 5

Type of books ordered by J.C.: 1 - Non-fiction (All About. . . Five Senses); 4 - Storybooks (One of these - Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles - School Daze)

D.G., Grade 5, Urban, Literature Based, Better Reader

Number of books read/shared at home/school during tracking periods = 31 (1/3 nonfiction books and materials; 2/3 fiction)

Total number of books ordered by D.G. = 3

Type of books ordered D.G.: 3 reference books (Football... Statistics, Webster's... Thesaurus, Student's Atlas)

Note: D.G. is less typical than most of the students studied. He is very interested in books that he can use as resources over a long period of time.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 10
Percentage of Tracked Selections from Book Clubs (Actual or Potential)

Student	Grade	Reader	Classroom	% of Book Club Selections
A.P.	5	P	Basal	88%
R.W.	3	P	Basal	43%
K.S.	1	B	Basal	33%
C.G.	1	P	Literature	33%
J.W.	5	B	Basal	33%
J.S.	3	B	Literature	28%
D.G.	5	B	Literature	26%
R.A.	3	P	Literature	24%
J.C.	1	P	Basal	23%
T.T.	3	B	Basal	21%
E.T.	5	P	Literature	20%
K.M.	1	B	Literature	19%

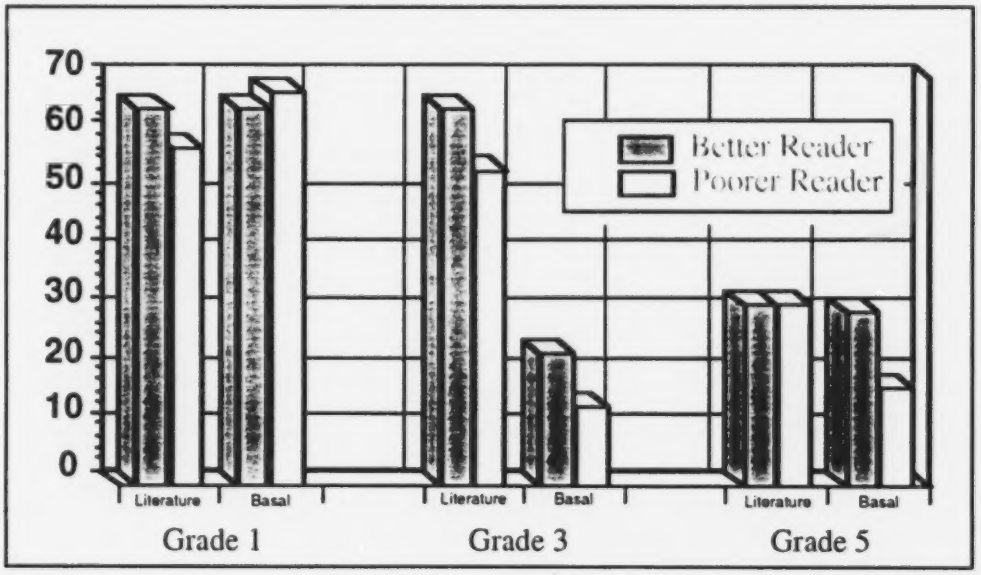
An analysis of the selections of books read to or by the targeted students, revealed that the highest percentage of book club selections were from poorer readers in basal classrooms. One assumption could be that in literature-based classrooms there are more books available for students to select from, hence there was less of a tendency to make use of the availability of books through the book clubs. In basal classrooms, teachers and students apparently have a greater need to make use of school book clubs to supplement their class and home libraries. In basal classrooms 30% of the tracked selections were either offered by or actually came from book clubs while in literature-based classrooms 25% did. Thirty-eight percent of poorer readers' selections and 25% of better readers' selections came from book clubs. Table 10 lays out these percentages for each of the students in the study.

Students in literature-based classrooms were more likely to have a similar amount of book experiences, regardless of their reading abilities. In basal classrooms the number of book experiences at grades 3 and 5 for our subset were very different between better and poorer readers. At grade 3, better readers in literature-based classrooms had 65 book experiences during the tracking periods. Poorer readers in these classrooms had 54. In basal classrooms the contrast was 23 book experiences for better readers to only 14 for poorer readers. Even greater disparities were shown at grade 5. Interestingly enough, there were negligible differences at grade 1. This may be attributed to the emphasis on shared reading, in which all students take part.

The amount of independent reading in which students engaged apparently accounted for the differences in grades 3 and 5. In literature-based classrooms better and poorer readers did similar amounts of independent reading, although difficulty levels varied. In basal classrooms, better readers apparently had more time or more of an inclination to engage in independent reading than poorer readers. It may be assumed that because basal-oriented classrooms are less likely to incorporate the use of literature into their core program, independent reading of trade books is not perceived as an option by reluctant readers to engage in on their own.

Figure 1 presents a comparison of the book experiences of better and poorer readers in the two kinds of classrooms (literature-based, basal-based), across the three grades (1,3,5).

Figure 1
Comparison of Book Experiences Between Better and Poorer Readers in Literature-Based and Basal-Based Classrooms



(2) What is the nature and content of the conversations held with children about their reading?

Method. Adult-child conversations were held about the books the children were reading. The protocol in Table 11 was used to analyze the conversations.

Table 11
Protocol Used to Analyze Conversations

Content	Mode
PLOT	Describes
CHARACTERS	Evaluates
SETTING/MOOD	Elaborates
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR	Interprets
STYLE	Abstracts
ILLUSTRATIONS	Links to other reading
GENRE	Links to life experiences

Result. Regardless of the category (more able/less able, urban/rural/suburban, literature-based/basal, grades 1/3/5), conversations reflected all the elements we thought we might find. Students discussed plot, characters, setting/mood, authors and illustrators, style, illustrations, and genres. These elements were discussed in various ways. They were described, evaluated, elaborated upon, interpreted, discussed in abstract terms, linked to other reading, and to life experiences.

As children mature, they tend to converse about books with more elaboration, interpretation, and abstraction. Better readers appear to engage in rich conversations regardless of the curriculum.

(3) How do the teachers in these classrooms make use of school book clubs?

Method. Content analysis of teacher interviews and field notes from classroom observations.

Results. In every instance, the decision to use a book club, the selection of which clubs to use, and the number of clubs in use is left entirely up to the discretion of the teacher. Every teacher was very careful to stress that while he or she encouraged the purchase of books to help improve a student's literary development, at no time did he or she encourage the purchase of books from a particular club for commercial reasons. Teacher preference was determined primarily by the type of selections offered (reading levels, etc.) and ease of ordering. Teachers who offered several book clubs felt that it was worth the extra time and effort required.

Reading and exposure to books varied widely among the students and from one classroom to another. In some classrooms, books played an integral part of the school day. Children were read to frequently. There was discussion of books, characters, authors, and illustrators. Trade books of all types, including "big books," were in both literature-based and basal classrooms.

Although these instructional activities occurred in all the classrooms to some extent, the literature-based classrooms seemed to have a richer literary orientation. In literature based classrooms students were more likely to be read to daily; they were given time and encouraged to read silently in school; books were discussed rather than used as the basis for questioning in a test-like manner. It should also be noted, that in all of the classrooms there was some use of trade books either for independent reading, guided reading instruction by the teacher, or reading aloud. In the two fifth-grade classes (except for the gifted target student who read on his own when he had free time in class), there seemed to be fewer actual minutes in the class day on reading instruction per se. This may be due to the growing emphasis on the content areas as children move through the grades.

In all classrooms, a fair amount of the students' day was committed to writing. Many classrooms used journals not only for regular writing period but also for other subject areas. Some literature-based and basal classrooms had access to computers and students were taught word processing skills, using a process writing approach.

Key Points:

•*Selection of clubs* - Teachers offered as few as one and as many as four book clubs during the year; Reading levels of books offered is important factor; Some rotate clubs;

•*Use of books* - books are used to supplement classroom libraries, support curricular themes; bonus points used to buy author kits, book sets, and books for children who cannot afford them;

•*Strengths* - teachers liked the wide variety of choices offered, quality literature, such as Caldecott and Newbery winners; new titles are available through book clubs before the library can obtain them; some teachers used the process to teach consumerism;

•*Concerns* - some children lack money to purchase books; better readers more apt to purchase books, less able readers more likely to select posters and stickers, however, this still represents a small part of the order;

•*Process* - At ordering time, available titles are discussed with children, book talks are given by teachers and others in class who nave read the books; books that support current class themes and activities are highlighted. When books arrive, children are encouraged to show and share selections.

(4) How do the parents of these students make use of book clubs?

Method. Content analysis of parent interviews.

Results. Parents interviewed were generally very positive about school book clubs. They view the book clubs as an important part of a child's literacy development. Participation is seen as a very concrete way to support their children's education. Parents vary in the amount of time they spend reviewing the order forms before purchase and in their participation in the reading experiences of their children. Parents of younger children generally took a more "hands on" approach to the ordering process; books ordered were likely to be shared one-to-one with the child. While parents of the poorer readers were not disinterested in their children's book selections, parents of better readers were apt to be very much involved regardless of the age of the child. Parents of better readers demonstrated awareness of specific book titles and literature preferences of their children.

Key Points:

•*Strengths* - Gives children responsibility for selecting own books; Good variety of offerings; good accessibility; helps to build home library;

•*Concerns* - virtually none; parents in this subset felt positive about book clubs and in control over the process; prefer children buy books rather than stickers and posters, but do not restrict their choices;

•*Process* - Parents of younger children read order forms with them, selections are made together, "hard" books are read aloud by parent; some parents of older children read forms; all monitor what is ordered; spending limit is imposed, although the amount varies widely.

Summary & Conclusions, Study 2

As noted in the introduction to this report, this study on "School Book Clubs and Literacy Development" is perhaps the first of its kind. Although the study is important for its uniqueness, its contribution will ultimately be judged in terms of what it contributes to the broader body of work to which it is related. For that reason, it is important to situate the study both in an historic sense and in terms of its potential significance to the field.

In the past, a number of studies have investigated the materials used to teach elementary school children. Most notable among these were studies that dealt with the use of basal readers, workbooks, and content-area textbooks (Anderson, Osborn, & Tierney, 1984). These studies suggested that the materials traditionally relied upon to advance literacy may have actually impeded the process by using highly contrived and uninteresting texts, an over-reliance on readability formulae, and the use of teachers guides that leave little or no room for flexibility and innovation. Prompted by these studies, reading educators and textbook companies began to rethink the nature of textbooks and teacher guides.

Classroom teachers, in particular, were motivated to seek materials that would be more likely to offset the problems of existing texts. At the same time, they sought to teach in ways that reflected a new and growing body of information suggesting that exposure to good literature is one of the most powerful tools for language and literacy development.

The use of literature has long been advocated as a key element in children's literacy programs. What distin-

guishes the current interest in literature-based literacy is the strong theoretical grounding in reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1978) upon which it is framed. The strength of these theoretical underpinnings and their implications for practice has inspired more recent researchers to turn their attention to such topics as the use of trade books to teach reading and writing, and the use of trade books in the content areas.

One of the most comprehensive and often-cited studies of this more current group of investigations is that of Walmsley and Walp (1989). It examined the use of literature in contemporary elementary classrooms. While this study indicates that we are a very long way from where we want to be, it provides a basis for decision making regarding both practice and future research.

Yet another line of research that helps situate the findings of this study is the research regarding the relationship between children's voluntary reading and their reading development Morrow (1992), Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990) and Anderson (1988) as determined by a variety of literacy measures. Studies of this type suggest a positive relationship between the amount of time children spend engaged in independent, voluntary reading and success in reading. These investigations suggest that type of "practice" students get when they are motivated to choose their own materials and read on their own may be an invaluable component of their literacy development.

The growing awareness among teachers and administrators regarding these ideas has caused them to turn to strategies for teaching literacy that rely heavily on the use of trade or library books. School book clubs have emerged as a key resource for obtaining the books they need. Thus, although school book clubs have been with us for a very long time, they are becoming increasingly important as the use of literature in classrooms becomes more important.

After spending a year tracking 12 students in the six elementary classrooms, we can make some summary statements on school book clubs and literacy development in these environments:

I. The instructional program

In classrooms where teachers and students participate in school book clubs, the books ordered play a significant and positive role in the literacy environment. The role of school book clubs in literature based classrooms differs from that

of basal oriented classrooms:

—In literature-based classrooms, the books ordered are more likely to become integral to the core instructional program, providing:

•key resources for the read aloud program;

•support for theme-based instruction;

•support for independent reading program;

•multiple copies (text sets) for literature response groups.

—In basal-oriented programs, the books ordered are more likely to be characterized as supplementary. However, they play a equally significant role. For some children, particularly those who the poorer readers, school book clubs provides a major resource for their voluntary reading.

II. The child

A. Participation in school book clubs supports child literacy development in a variety of ways. The following factors appear to be most influential:

•Student choice and involvement in selection;

•Student ownership;

•Active demonstration of shared values among student, parent, and teacher.

B. Participation in school book clubs has a special, complementary role in the voluntary reading of the child. While that role is significant and positive for both better and poorer readers, it may be a more critical factor in the literacy development in poorer readers.

Study 3: Analysis of Book Club Offerings, 1991-1992

The publishers of the three major book clubs (Scholastic, Troll, Trumpet) graciously agreed to donate to us the entire offerings of the book clubs that are appropriate to grades K-6. What we analyzed represented the materials that would have been sent to a teacher had she checked off every single item on every single order form for an entire year.

Data Analysis

A total of 84 orders were analyzed, comprising Scholastic Seesaw (10 orders, from September, 1991 to June, 1992); Scholastic Lucky (10 orders, September, 1991 to June, 1992); Scholastic Arrow (10 orders, from September, 1991 to June, 1992); Troll Club 1 [K-1] (10 orders, from September 1991, to Summer, 1992); Troll Club 2 [2-3] (10 orders, from September, 1991, to June, 1992); Troll Club 3 [4-6] (10 orders, from September, 1991, to Summer, 1992); Trumpet Early Years (8 orders, from September, 1991, to May, 1992); Trumpet Primary Years (8 orders, from September, 1991, to May, 1992); and Trumpet Middle Years (8 orders, from September, 1991, to May, 1992). Each order contained approximately 39 books, 5 miscellaneous items, 2 audio tapes, and 1 videotape. However, these items were not spread evenly across all book clubs (some book clubs had more books and fewer ancillary items, some clubs had little or no computer software, and so on). Since the study was not designed to compare the individual merits of specific book clubs, we conducted the analyses on the materials as a whole.

It became immediately apparent that there were many repeated items; however, each item was given its own entry in the database. In the analyses that follow, we will present findings in two ways: one that treats items as part of a month's offerings, regardless of how many times the item is repeated over the year, in the same book club or in others; the other that eliminates duplicate items.

First, we separated the materials into four categories, representing books, audio tapes/videotapes/film strips, computer software, and miscellaneous items (posters, stickers, pencils, stuffed animals, etc.) (see Table 12).

Next, we analyzed the books along several dimensions, including their genre, their format, their topic, their linguistic structure, and their cultural diversity. We also noted whether a book had won a major book award.

Genre. We used an adaptation of Walmsley, Fielding, and Walp's (1991) genre coding scheme. This scheme,

Table 12
Numbers of Materials in Four Major Categories (Books, Media, Computer Software, Miscellaneous)

Type	Total #	# Duplicates
Books	3291	1086
Miscellaneous	451	147
Media—Audio tapes	155	48
Media—Videotapes	82	26
Media—Film Strips	2	0
Computer Software	29	14

which is itself an adaptation of Huck's (1987) genre categories and Lukens' (1982) scheme, divides genre into five major categories (Traditional Literature, Concepts, Realism, Fantasy, and Nonfiction). One primary difference between our scheme and Huck's is that we separate a book's physical characteristics (e.g., a picture book) from its genre. These categories are further broken down in Table 13.

For the current study, we added several other genre categories made necessary by the nature of the material we were analyzing (see Table 14).

It needs to be said that no genre category scheme is capable of uniquely distinguishing between different kinds of books, and there are different ways of conceiving the notion of genre (see Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987; Lukens, 1982). In cases where we were unsure of the genre category in which a particular book should be placed, we discussed the options among the research team members, and made a judgment collectively.

Format. In this study, we used the format coding scheme devised by Walmsley, Fielding, and Walp (1991), with some minor additions. Format categories are explained in Table 15.

Topic. We wanted to explore the range of topics covered by book club books, and so we recorded what we felt were the major topics of each book, as they were coded. We did not attempt to fit these into any predetermined scheme,

Table 13
Genre Coding Scheme

Major Category	Sub-Category	Explanation
Traditional Literature	Myths and Legends	Myths frequently explain natural phenomena through religious or ritualistic plots. Legends are stories presented as true accounts of past secular events or heroes
	Folk Tales	Fictional stories with predictable plot structure (e.g., "Once upon a time"). they often depict conflicts between good and evil where good eventually "lives happily ever after."
	Fairy Tales	Fairy tales share many of the same characteristics as folk tales but are often longer and contain romantic elements
	Fables	Fables are very short stories, usually with animal characters depicting human behaviors, that teach a lesson or moral.
	Epics	Epics are long narratives with the adventures of a heroic figure at the center of the action.
Concepts	Concepts	Stories or collections of pictures or photographs that focus on a concept area such as letters of the alphabet, numbers, colors, or shapes.
Realism	Realistic Fiction	In realistic fiction, the plot, the setting, and characters depict "real life" situations and issues but are not actual, true accounts. (The book's characters are either human [H] or animal [A].)
	Mystery	Mystery contains elements of suspense and involves the reader in solving the problem that drives the plot.
	Scary*	In a scary book, the purpose is to tell a horrifying or frightening story, frequently involving ghosts, aliens, or "creatures"
	Humor	Literature which, through the situations depicted, the language used, or sheer nonsense, is written to make children laugh.
	Adventure	Adventure stories are fast-paced and include elements of excitement. The plot may center around overcoming difficulties, journeys, or quests.
	Historical Fiction	Literature based on historical settings and events but fictional elements, such as the characters, are used.
Fantasy	Science Fiction	Science fiction draws upon hypothesized scientific and technological advances in telling stories about the future of mankind.
	Fantasy	Fantasy creates an imaginary world which departs from what is real and expected, yet is made believable through the characters' experiences.
Nonfiction	Reference	A variety of printed materials that present factual information about particular events or topics, typically in a list.
	[Auto]biography	Stories or accounts of the lives of people, particularly famous ones, told by self (autobiography) or by others (biography).
	Informational	Informational text is factual and may be supported by detailed descriptions, definitions, illustrations and examples to clarify the information presented.

Table 14
Additional Genre Categories

Major Category	Sub-Category	Explanation
Nonfiction	Activity	Collection of individual activities, such as puzzles, games, coloring, bound in a single volume.
Traditional Literature	Folk Song	Folk story told in verse.
Poetry	Poetry	Individual poem, or collection of poems (as opposed to story, myth, fairy tale told in verse)

Table 15
Format Coding Scheme

Format	Description
Wordless Picture Book	Book without any text, in which the illustrations carry the story on their own.
Picture Story Book	Book with pictures and text, in which the illustrations carry much of the story, complemented by the text.
Illustrated Story Book	Book with pictures and text, in which the text carries the story, complemented by the illustrations.
Illustrated Chapter Book	Book with pictures and text in chapter form, in which the illustrations complement the text.
Chapter Book	Book with text in chapter form, with no illustrations.
Anthology/Collection	Book of collected stories, poems, or other material, either in full or in excerpts.
Drama	Text presented in dramatic form.
Diary	Text presented in diary format.
Document	Text presented as a document (e.g., a proclamation).
Magazine	Text in magazine format.
Newspaper	Text in newspaper format.
Non-print	Information, stories, presented in a non-print format (e.g., audio tape, videotape).
Cartoon Book*	Book in a cartoon format.
Pamphlet*	Text presented in a pamphlet format.

*created for this study

and the books' topics are discussed within their genre (see below).

Cultural diversity. We recorded whether a book's theme, author, characters, or topic represented or promoted cultural diversity. We defined the criteria for this category as follows: Book which focus on members of a language and/or cultural community considered to be an American ethnic minority, such as African American (including Caribbean cultures), Amish Americans, Asian Americans (including Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and other far Eastern cultures), Hispanics, Jewish Americans, and Native Americans. We include books in which the ethnicity of the characters is of central importance to the storyline or very apparent through the illustrations; books based on the folklore and true life experiences of a country of origin of these American ethnic communities, such as Africa, Japan, etc.; and books written or illustrated by individuals who may or may not be members of the ethnic groups represented. Our definition excludes books that are simply written or illustrated by a minority group member, but not focusing on the minority experience. For example, Donald Crews' "Freight Train," a picture book about trains, would not be included.

Awards. We recorded whether a book had been given a literary or artistic award. Although there are hundreds of book awards given each year, we have, for this analysis, only recorded the major literary and artistic awards: ALA Best Book; ALA Notable Children's Book; Caldecott Medal Book; Caldecott Honor Book; Newbery Medal Book; Newbery Honor Book; NYTimes Best Illustrated Book; Christopher Award; IRA Children's Choice; Parents' Choice Award Book; Lewis Carroll Shelf Award; Boston Globe-Horn Book [Illus].

Findings, Study 3

Analysis of Books

Analysis of books by genre. Table 16 presents an analysis of the 1991-92 book club collection by genre. Table 17 presents the same data, listed in rank order from highest to lowest. Viewed from the perspective of the four major genre categories (Traditional Literature, Realism, Fantasy, and Nonfiction), 202 books (6%) are from the Traditional Literature genre, 1512 books (46%) are from Realism, 485 books (15%) are from Fantasy, and 692 books (21%) are from Nonfiction. Another way of looking at this data is to say that over half of the books (56%) are represented by three genres (Realistic Fiction, Fantasy, and Informational).

Table 16
Analysis of Books by Genre

Major Category	Sub-Category	# of books N=3291	# duplicates N=1058
Traditional Literature	Myths and Legends	29	12
	Folk Tales	97	38
	Fairy Tales	56	25
	Folk Song	13	5
	Fables	6	3
	Epics	1	0
Concepts	Concepts	70	13
Realism	Realistic Fiction [H]	630	153
	Realistic Fiction [A]	262	84
	Mystery	173	74
	Scary	46	11
	Humor	144	58
	Adventure	157	72
	Historical Fiction	100	33
Fantasy	Science Fiction	41	15
	Fantasy	444	167
Nonfiction	Reference	53	29
	[Auto]biography	140	41
	Informational	499	120
	Activity	200	65
Poetry	Poetry	46	22
Mixture		17	8
Not able to categorize:		67	10

If we look at how many books representing different kinds of genres are present in a given monthly offering (this is hypothetical, since we are combining the offerings of all the clubs), it looks like this: each monthly offering would have 7 realistic fiction books (with human characters), 6 informational, 5 fantasy, 3 realistic fiction (with animals as characters), 2 activity books, 2 mystery, 1-2 adventure, 1-2 humor, 1-2 autobiography or biography, 1 historical fiction, and 1 folk tale. Every other month, there would be 1 concept book, 1 fairy tale, and 1 reference book. Every two months, there would be 1 scary book, 1 poetry book, and 1 science fiction book. Every three months, there would be myth or legend. Folk songs would come once in six months, fables once every 14 months, and epics once every eight years!

Table 17
Analysis of Books by Genre (Rank Ordered)

Sub-Category	# of books N=3291
Realistic Fiction [H]	630 (19%)
Informational	499 (15%)
Fantasy	444 (13%)
Realistic Fiction [A]	262 (8%)
Activity	200 (6%)
Mystery	173 (5%)
Adventure	157 (5%)
Humor	144 (4%)
[Auto]biography	140 (4%)
Historical Fiction	100 (3%)
Folk Tales	97 (3%)
Concepts	70 (2%)
Fairy Tales	56 (2%)
Reference	53 (2%)
Scary	46 (1%)
Poetry	46 (1%)
Science Fiction	41 (1%)
Myths and Legends	29 (<1%)
Mixture	17 (<1%)
Folk Song	13 (<1%)
Fables	6 (<1%)
Epics	1 (<1%)
Unable to Categorize	67

If our data on the number of items that children order per month is correct, however, then the majority of subscribers to the book clubs (about 80% of whom order no more than 4 books per order) will find all the major genres well represented in the offerings each month. The data also indicate that in only few cases will children "run out" of books in most genres (science fiction may be one of these, as might scary books, concept books, and poetry collections). Myths and Legends, Folk Songs, Fables and Epics are in particularly short supply across the clubs, however, and a child or teacher would need to purchase from all three clubs in order to have even a meager selection of books from these genres.

When we examine some of the larger genre categories, some interesting observations can be made. For example, the largest category, Realistic Fiction (with human characters) is made up of 630 books. Most currently popular authors are represented in this collection: Judy Blume, Beverly Cleary, Patricia Reilly Giff, Ezra Jack Keats,

James Marshall, Ann Martin, Robert McCloskey, Gary Paulsen, Louis Sachar, Jerry Spinelli, Vera B. Williams, and Harriet Ziefert, to mention just a few. Just under a quarter of these are series books (Baby-sitter, Sweet Valley Twins, etc.). About 25% of the books are about family life situations, while just under 20% are about school life. Twelve percent are award-winning books (Newbery, Caldecott, ALA Notable, etc.). Six percent of the books represent cultural diversity. The selection is varied, and while it leans toward popular fiction, there are many books in this category to challenge even the strongest reader.

There are 499 informational books. These books are on a wide range of topics. Twelve percent of the informational books are about animals (wild and domestic); 6% are about people, 6% about science, 6% about sports, and 6% about art. Other books are about manners, careers and occupations, communication, cooking, different countries, crafts, dinosaurs, drugs, the environment, games, gardens, geography, history, hobbies, insects, seasons and the weather, space, transportation, and war. A number of authors known for the quality of their informational writing are represented in this collection: Aliki, Robert Ballard, Byron Barton, Richard Brenner, Joanna Cole, Janet Craig, Lois Ehlert, Gail Gibbons, Ruth Gross, Alice Provensen, Elizabeth Ryan, and Gretchen Super, to name a few. There are a few informational books on TV and movie shows and on video games, but the informational books lean toward topics that challenge children to enlarge their knowledge of the world, and seem to us to be a good sampling of nonfiction books, which are quickly becoming a major presence in elementary school. Six percent of the books represent cultural diversity, and 2% are award-winning books.

There are 444 fantasy books. Eighty-seven percent of them are from book clubs serving children in grades K-3; 19% are books in which authors and illustrators have created imaginary worlds; 16% are about animals. But these books also are about holidays and festivals (mostly Christmas), family life, monsters and aliens, nature, school life, space, sports, toys, and transportation. Among the authors and illustrators of these fantasy books are some of the best-known in children's literature: Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Frank Asch, Jan Brett, Norman Bridwell, Eric Carle, Patrick Catling, Roald Dahl, Laurent De Brunhoff, Tomie de Paola, Roger Duvoisin, Mem Fox, Eric Hill, Mick Inkpen, Leo Lionni, Mercer Mayer, Bernard Most, Katherine Paterson, John Peterson, Dr. Seuss, Robert Kimmel Smith, Peter Spier, William Steig, Chris Van Allsburg, and Charlotte Zolotow, to mention just a few. Two percent of the books represent cultural diversity, and 10% are award-winners.

Realistic fiction with animals as characters accounts for 262 books. This category is dominated by the Berenstain Bear books (just under 20%), and although not in such profusion, there are several other series, too: Marc Brown's Arthur books, Lillian Hoban's Arthur books, the Babar adventures, Curious George, Frog and Toad, Mercer Mayer's "critters," the Tiny Toon series, and Beatrix Potter's immortal rabbits. All of these books are about animals, but they are animals behaving like humans, especially humans in family situations. Many of them have a moral to them, in a very gentle way (for example, getting glasses can be quite traumatic for children, and you should be sensitive to their embarrassment, according to Marc Brown in "Arthur's Eyes"). In addition to Stan and Jan Berenstain, Marc Brown, Lillian Hoban, Laurent De Brunhoff, H.A. Rey, Arnold Lobel, Mercer Mayer, Linda Aber, and Beatrix Potter (authors/ illustrators of the series above), there are other authors and illustrators represented in this category: Nancy Carlson, Marjorie Flack, Kevin Henkes, James Howe, Robert Kraus, Anna Sewell, William Steig, and Hans Wilhelm. Only one book represents diversity in this group (a Berenstain Bear book translated into Spanish); 5% of the books are award winners.

What we call Activity books account for 200 books. Activity books comprise coloring books, trivia books, brain busters (collections of brain teasers), mazes, word find puzzles, tracing books, albums, dot-to-dot coloring books, and mad libs. They also include a series of books in which the reader is invited to search for characters (the most celebrated of these are Martin Handford's "Where's Waldo?", but there are others such as "Search for Santa's Helpers," and a series called, "What's Wrong...").

Mysteries account for 173 books. Most of the mystery books in the collection are mystery series. One of these, Gertrude Warner's "Boxcar children," accounts for 40% of the books in this category. Others include Donald Sobol's Encyclopedia Brown, the Baby-sitters Club mysteries, David Adler's Cam Jansen books, the Nancy Drew series, and a cartoon mystery series, Disney's Darkwing Duck. A newcomer to these series is the "Where in the USA/Time is Carmen Sandiego?" by John Peel. The collection also includes books on true mysteries (for example, one on true medical mysteries) and many individual mystery titles (for example, E. L. Konigsburg). None of the books in this category represent diversity, but 5% of them have received awards.

Adventures account for 157 books. This is an interesting and varied collection of some of the most well-

known adventures. Books in this category include classics such as Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days" and "20,000 leagues under the sea," R. L. Stevenson's "Kidnapped," several of Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer" adventures, Jack London's "Call of the Wild," and Hugh Lofting's "Voyages of Dr. Dolittle." They also include more recent works, such as Jean Craighead George's "Julie of the Wolves," "On the Far Side of the Mountain," and "My Side of the Mountain"; Lynne Bank Reid's "Indian in the Cupboard" and its sequels, Sheila Burnford's "Incredible Journey"; and Sid Fleischman's "Whipping Boy." Rounding out the collection are more whimsical adventures, such as Disney's "101 Dalmatians." Ten percent of these books represent cultural diversity; 16% of them are award-winners.

Humorous books account for 144 books. Joke books (collections of jokes on a variety of topics) represent 20% of the titles; a further 20% are Garfield comic books. Thirteen percent are Amelia Bedelia books. The rest of the books in this category include more comic books (Far Side, Calvin & Hobbes), "silly" books (e.g., Marc Brown's "Pickle Things"), and books of riddles. Joke books are very popular with children in the early to middle elementary grades, and this collection clearly is aimed to satisfy their appetite for jokes. One book in this category has received an award; no books represent cultural diversity.

Biographies or autobiographies account for 140 books. There are several different kinds of biographies: historical figures in American history (George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Christopher Columbus, Benjamin Franklin, James Monroe, Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass); biographies of other notables in history (e.g., Helen Keller, Florence Nightingale); and biographies of living famous people (e.g., Colin Powell, sports personalities, stars of TV and movies). Thirty-one percent of the books in this category are about sports personalities, 20% are about TV or movie stars. There are only a handful of autobiographies. They include Jean Fritz's "Homesick: My Own Story," Roald Dahl's "Boy," and Robyn Miller 's "Robyn's Book: A True Diary." Thirty-four percent of the books represent cultural diversity; 2% are award-winners.

Historical fiction account for 100 books. These books are divided between stories set in Colonial times (e.g., Ann McGovern's "The Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving"), in the Revolutionary War (e.g., Esther Forbes' "Johnny Tremain"), in the Civil War (e.g., Patricia Beatty's "Charley Skedaddle," Jeanette Winter's "Follow the Drinking Gourd"—about the underground railway), opening up the West (Scott O'Dell's "Sing Down the Moon," Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little

House" series), and World War II (Carol Matas' "Lisa's War," Bette Greene's "Summer of My German Soldier"). We also included the American Girls series in this category, because the books are about life in different periods of history. Fifteen percent of the books in this category represent cultural diversity; 34% are award-winners.

Folk tales account for 97 books. The books in this category represent a varied selection of traditional and modern folk tales. The traditional folk tales (generally retold and given fresh illustrations) include "The Owl and the Pussy Cat," "The Three Little Pigs," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Puss-in-Boots," and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." There are also several folk tales from other countries, including "Lazy Jack" from England; "Always Room for One More" from Scotland; "Ashanti to Zulu," "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters," and "Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears" from Africa; "The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks" from China; and "The Legend of Scarface: A Blackfoot Indian Tale" and "Johnny Appleseed" from the United States. Finally, there are several collections of folk tales from around the world. Twenty-two percent of the books represent cultural diversity; 38% are award-winners. Almost all the books in this category are illustrated story books; the few remaining books are anthologies.

Concepts account for 70 books. Counting books (or books related to math) represent 29%; 20% are alphabet books; 14% are coloring books. The rest include books about language concepts (up-down; in-out) and parts of speech. Four percent of the books represent cultural diversity; 4% are award-winners.

Fairy tales account for 56 books. Although various versions of Walt Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" dominate this category (36%), there is a good selection of the Grimm Brothers' ("Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Jorinda and Joringel") and Hans Christian Andersen's ("Ugly Duckling," "Emperor's New Clothes," "Wild Swans") fairy tales in the collection. The collection also includes "Cinderella," "Jack and the Beanstalk," even some comic book and pop-up versions of popular fairy tales. Two percent of the fairy tale books represent cultural diversity; 9% of the books are award-winners.

Reference books account for 53 titles. The Guinness Book of World Records accounts for 28% of the books in this category, which also includes atlases, dictionaries, thesauruses, baseball cards, and even a reference book on car license plates!

What we call Scary books, books aimed at scaring the reader of out his or her wits, account for 46 books. Authors represented in this category include Edgar Allan Poe, Eve Bunting, and Avi. There are several collections of scary stories in this group.

Poetry accounts for 46 books. These are collections of poems (either written by a single poet, or collections of other poet's work), as opposed to stories told in verse or rhyme. Many of the best-known poets and collectors of poetry are represented here: Shel Silverstein, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Jack Prelutsky, Eloise Greenfield, and Paul Fleischman, to name a few. There are also "lighter" collections of poems (for example, X. J. Kennedy's "Brats"), and anthologies of poetry for special times of the year.

Science Fiction accounts for 41 books. Two serious science fiction writers' work is well represented—Madeleine L'Engle and John Christopher. Several of L'Engle's books are offered ("Swiftly Tilting Planet," "Wind in the Door," "Wrinkle in Time"), as are Christopher's Tripod Quartet (e.g., "City of Gold and Lead," "The Pool of Fire"). Two other kinds of science fiction books are here: one based on movies and cartoons (e.g., "Back to the Future," "Teenage Ninja Turtles", "The Jetsons"); the other, Bruce Coville's humor-sci fi "My teacher..." series. Children and teachers seeking science fiction books in any quantity will probably have to look outside the book clubs to find them.

Myths or legends account for 29 books. This is a very small, but quite select collection of myths and legends that includes Gerald McDermott's "Arrow to the Sun"; Olaf Baker's "Where the Buffaloes Begin"; two of Tomie dePaola's retold legends ("Legend of the Bluebonnet"; "Legend of the Indian Paintbrush"), several books on Greek myths, and Steven Kellogg's retelling of the Pecos Bill legend. Sixteen of the 29 books represent cultural diversity, and 6 of the books are award-winners.

A mix of genres accounts for 17 books. These books are collections of short stories, or anthologies of poetry, stories, folk tales, and so on.

Folk-songs account for 6 books. These are collections of songs for holidays, or gathered from other countries.

Table 18
Analysis of Books by Format (Rank Ordered)

Format	Total # (N=3291)	# of duplicates (N=1038)
Illustrated Story Book	1261 (38%)	420
Anthology/Collection	593 (18%)	198
Illustrated Chapter Book	554 (17%)	223
Chapter Book	544 (17%)	126
Picture Story Book	225 (7%)	62
Cartoon Book	25 (<1%)	10
Wordless Picture Book	23 (<1%)	10
Magazine	22 (<1%)	3
Diary	18 (<1%)	9
Pamphlet	6 (<1%)	3
Drama	3 (<1%)	0
Newspaper	1 (<1%)	0
Document	-	-
Non-print	-	-
not categorized	110	

Fables account for 6 books. They include collections of Aesop's fables, Mwenye Haditihi's "Lazy Lion," and Maurice Sendak's cautionary tale about Pierre.

One book is an epic. It is Lloyd Alexander's Newbery Award winning "The High King: 5th Chronicle of Prydain."

When we view the collection of books as a whole, what stands out is the enormous range and variety of the offerings. While the largest category of books is Realistic Fiction (it accounts for 27% of the collection), and 56% of all the books are Realistic Fiction, Fantasy, or Informational, all the major genres are represented to a greater or lesser extent.

Analysis of books by Format. Table 18 presents the analysis of the books by their format. It will be seen from this table that illustrated story books is the most frequent format (38%), followed by almost even numbers of Anthology/Collections (18%), Illustrated Chapter Books (17%), and Chapter Books (17%). Given that the clubs we analyzed

Table 19
Analysis of Books by Cultural Diversity

Sub-Category	# Books representing Diversity (N=210)	# of books N=3291
Realistic Fiction [H]	47 (7%)	630 (19%)
Informational	29 (6%)	499 (15%)
Fantasy	10 (2%)	444 (13%)
Realistic Fiction [A]	1 (<1%)	262 (8%)
Activity	1 (<1%)	200 (6%)
Mystery	0 (0%)	173 (5%)
Adventure	15 (10%)	157 (5%)
Humor	0 (0%)	144 (4%)
[Auto]biography	47 (34%)	140 (4%)
Historical Fiction	15 (15%)	100 (3%)
Folk Tales	21 (22%)	97 (3%)
Concepts	3 (4%)	70 (2%)
Fairy Tales	1 (2%)	56 (2%)
Reference	0 (0%)	53 (2%)
Scary	0 (0%)	46 (1%)
Poetry	3 (7%)	46 (1%)
Science Fiction	0 (0%)	41 (1%)
Myths and Legends	16 (55%)	29 (<1%)
Mixture	-	17 (<1%)
Folk Song	1 (7%)	13 (<1%)
Fables	0 (0%)	6 (<1%)
Epics	0 (0%)	1 (<1%)

cover the span from Kindergarten through 6th grade, this distribution seems entirely appropriate to us. Almost all the wordless picture books and picture story books are in the orders for the youngest students (there would have been many more of these had we analyzed the pre-school book clubs), while most of the chapter books are in the orders for the older children.

Analysis of books by Cultural Diversity. We have alluded to the cultural diversity of the collection, within each of the genre categories. Table 19 presents the number of culturally diverse books so that the category can be viewed as a whole. It will be seen from this table that cultural diversity is not represented evenly across the genres, nor is it proportional to the overall numbers of books: most of the culturally diverse books are in Biography and Realistic Fiction rather than in other categories, but there are more culturally diverse books, proportionately speaking, in Myths and Legends. This probably is to be expected, given how many myths and legends have their origins in what are now

Table 20
Analysis of Books by Awards

Sub-Category	# Award-winning books (N=281)	# of books N=3291
Realistic Fiction [H]	75 (12%)	630 (19%)
Informational	9 (2%)	499 (15%)
Fantasy	46 (10%)	444 (13%)
Realistic Fiction [A]	11 (4%)	262 (8%)
Activity	0 (0%)	200 (6%)
Mystery	8 (5%)	173 (5%)
Adventure	25 (16%)	157 (5%)
Humor	1 (<1%)	144 (4%)
[Auto]biography	3 (2%)	140 (4%)
Historical Fiction	34 (34%)	100 (3%)
Folk Tales	37 (38%)	97 (3%)
Concepts	3 (4%)	70 (2%)
Fairy Tales	5 (9%)	56 (2%)
Reference	2 (4%)	53 (2%)
Scary	2 (4%)	46 (1%)
Poetry	6 (13%)	46 (1%)
Science Fiction	3 (7%)	41 (1%)
Myths and Legends	6 (20%)	29 (<1%)
Mixture	-	17 (<1%)
Folk Song	1 (8%)	13 (<1%)
Fables	0 (0%)	6 (<1%)
Epics	1 (100%)	1 (<1%)

minority cultures, and how much interest there is in learning about the contributions of minority culture members, especially in politics, history, and sports.

Awards. Approximately 9% of the books offered through the book clubs have received a literary or artistic award. Table 20 shows the percentage of award-winning books broken down by the genre categories.

As with cultural diversity, the award-winning books do not seem to be distributed evenly across the offerings. Discounting the single book in the Epic genre (which happened to be a Newbery Award winner), and books in the Activity category (which aren't considered literature, and therefore cannot be expected to receive literary awards), books in the Folk Tales, Historical Fiction, Myths and Legends, and Adventure categories have the highest proportion of awards. Award-winning Informational books especially are underrepresented, although it is probably the case that

more literary awards are given for works of fiction. It also may be that because so many of the books in the offerings have very recent copyrights (10% were copyrighted in 1992, 17% in 1991, and 13% in 1990), there are probably books in the book clubs that have not yet received awards.

What can be said is that award-winning books are well represented in the offerings. Averaged out across all 84 orders, there are just over three award-winning books in each order. While that apparently does not satisfy some teachers and parents (according to Study 1), we wonder if more than 9% of a typical shelf of books in a school or children's library, or even in a bookstore, are award-winning books.

Analysis of Miscellaneous Items

In the collection were 451 miscellaneous items. Table 21 presents the analysis of all these items in the 85 orders across the three book clubs.

We heard frequently from teachers and parents that they were concerned about all the posters and stickers their students were getting from the book clubs, and several parents told us that they prohibited their children from ordering these items. From Table 21 it is clear that stickers and posters and kits (most of these are art kits for coloring) dominate the miscellaneous items (roughly one per order). However, 24 (28%) of the stickers are sent free to teachers or students with orders; 32 (38%) of the posters are sent free to teachers and students as bonus items.

Audio tapes, Videotapes, and Filmstrips

There are 237 audio-visual products in the 84 orders, comprised of 155 audio tapes and 82 videotapes. Table 22 presents the number of these items, and duplicates.

The audio tapes generally comprise readings of children's books, although there are a few audio tapes that feature authors or illustrators, or come bundled in an author kit. Audio tapes come in one of three configurations: they come bundled with a book (typically adding about 50¢ to the cost of the book; just over half of them come this way), or as a separate item (usually costing $2.25), or as teacher bonus (very few). The tapes cover a wide variety of books, but almost all of them are illustrated picture or story books, typically for K-2. Many teachers spoke to us about using these

Table 21
Analysis of Miscellaneous Items

Item	Total # N=433	# of duplicates
Stickers	86	29
Posters	83	17
Kits	73	34
Poster books	27	13
Book marks	17	5
Teacher Guides	15	1
Calendars	13	8
Activity sheets	13	9
Stamps	12	5
Pencils	10	4
Maps	8	1
Stuffed animals/dolls	8	2
Cards	7	2
Post-It notes	7	1
Book plates	6	1
Door knob signs	6	2
Borders	5	1
Stencils	5	2
Albums	4	2
Plastic toys	4	0
Certificates	4	1
Puzzles	3	0
Erasers	3	2
Labels	2	1
Games	2	0
Memo boards	2	1
Magnets	2	0
Masks	1	0
Bracelets	1	0
Book covers	1	0
Key chains	1	0
Folders	1	1
Chart	1	0

book-tape combinations for their listening center in Kindergarten and 1st grade. They have a very large selection to draw from.

The videotapes comprise an assortment of cartoons based on books ("Madeline and the Bad Hat," "Curious George," "Baby-sitters"), TV series ("Little House" series), and a series of specially videotaped versions of books,

Table 22
Analysis of Audio-Visual Materials

Item	Total # N=237	# duplicates
Audio tapes	155	48
Videotapes	82	26

using readings, cartoons, and puppets (Children's Circle Series). Videotapes range in price from $9.95 to $14.95.

Analysis of Computer Software

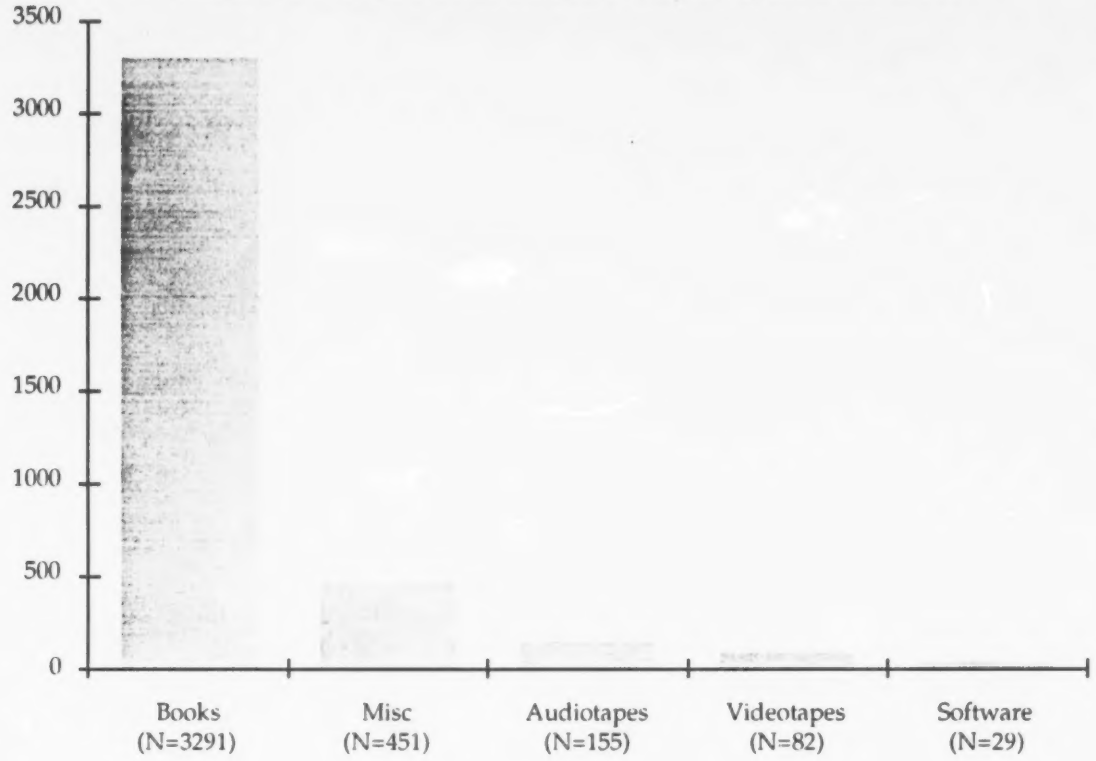
Twenty-nine software packages were included in the 84 orders, with 15 duplicates. The computer software is divided among games (e.g., "Wheel of Fortune"), printing kits, and instructional programs (e.g., dissecting frogs). Versions of most of the programs are available for IBM, Tandy, Apple II and Apple IIGS computers, and range in price from $12.95 to $19.95.

Summary, Study 3

We came to this study with a few preconceptions about what it would tell us about the make-up of the book club offerings. By the time we started the analyses, we had conducted a number of the interviews for Study 1, and had heard a variety of complimentary and not-so-complimentary views about the books and other materials offered by the book clubs. If we had not also interviewed executives in each of the three major book club publishers, we would have expected to find a preponderance of contemporary realistic fiction, nonfiction materials about sports and TV personalities, and huge numbers of stickers and posters. But unlike most of the participants in our study, who knew one or two book clubs well, and used hearsay or previous experiences to make judgments of the others, our analysis of the materials is based on a direct examination of almost all the materials offered across a year by the three major book club publishers (with the notable exception of the pre-school materials, and materials designed for grade 7 and above). Even if a teacher, parent, or child orders regularly from a book club, they will not get to see all of the actual items offered on a monthly basis. We had all the books and materials in front of us, and were able to analyze the actual items.

The first conclusion we draw about the book club offerings is that they are rightly called "*book* clubs." Books

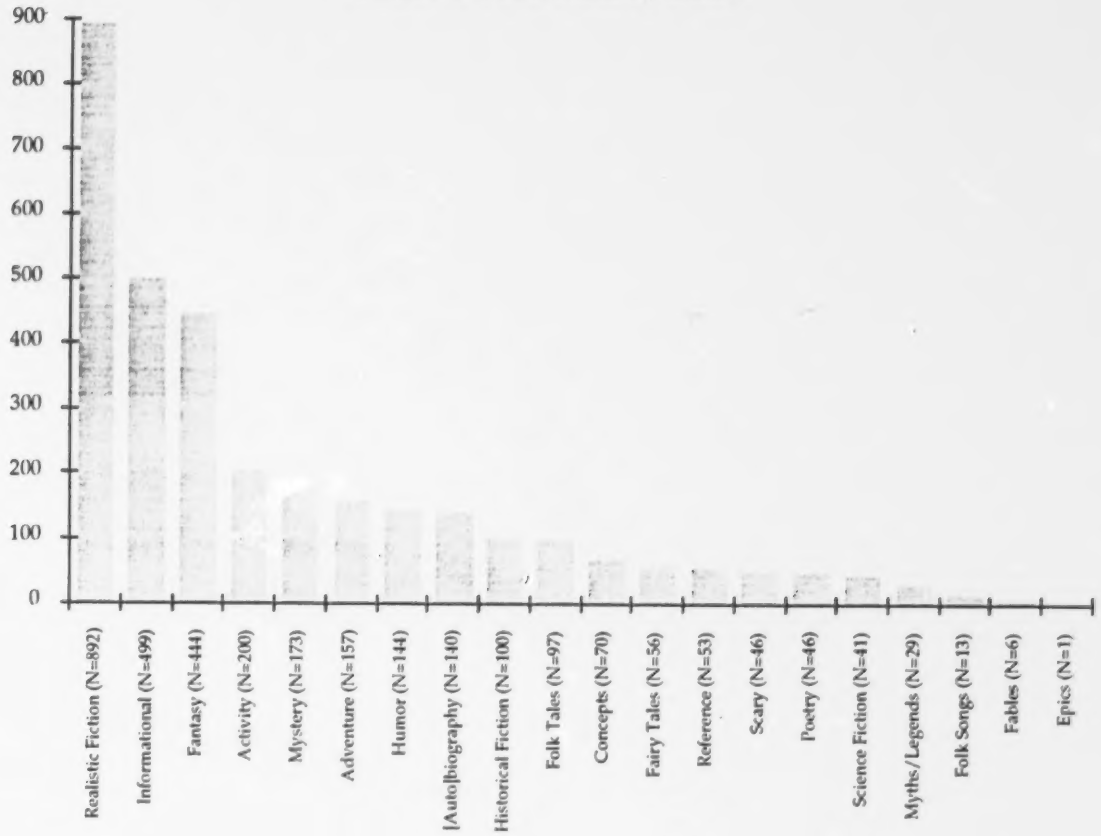
Figure 2
Numbers of Books and Other Materials Offered by the Book Clubs



account for 82% of everything offered by the book clubs, while miscellaneous items account for 11%. If we chart the number of books and other materials (miscellaneous items, audio and video tapes, and computer software) offered by the three book clubs, we find that books outnumber all other materials by a factor of 4.6 (in other words, there are over four-and-a-half times as many books in the offerings as everything else combined). Figure 2 graphically illustrates this point.

Secondly, we learned that book clubs do offer a wide range of books that goes far beyond contemporary realistic fiction. While it is true that realistic fiction is the largest category of books (27% of the collection), informational and fantasy books are also well represented in the offerings. In fact, most of the major genres are well represented in the book clubs, including traditional literature (e.g., folk and fairy tales), concepts, realism (realistic fiction,

Figure 3
Analysis of Book Clubs by Genre



historical fiction, mystery, humor, and adventure), fantasy, and informational books (e.g., reference, informational, biography, and autobiography). Figure 3 graphically illustrates the breadth of the offerings.

We were also interested in how well the book club offerings represented cultural diversity, and the extent to which award-winning books permeated the collection. Culturally diverse books, as we have defined the term, account for just under 6.5% of the offerings, while award-winning books account for approximately 9% (this latter figure is conservative, since we have only listed the major literary and artistic awards). These figures may not satisfy all teachers or parents, but we wonder how different these figures are from the proportion of culturally diverse and award-winning books in school or public libraries. Since we have no comparative data, we are unable to say if the book clubs' repre-

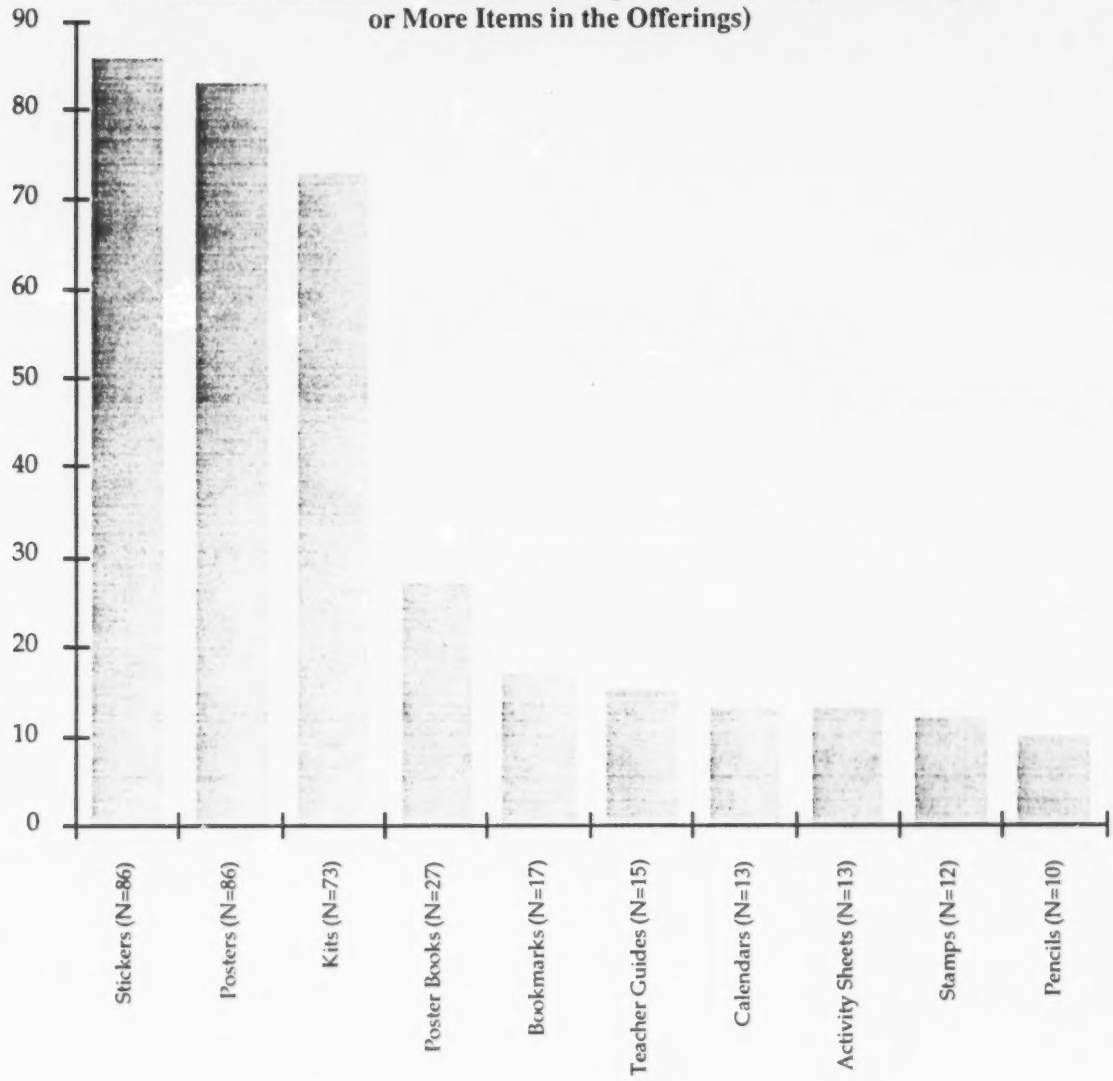
sentation of these two kinds of books is greater, equal, or lower than one might expect. However, each book club order of 40 books will—on average—contain just under four award-winning books, and just under three culturally diverse books. That seems to us to be substantial representation of books in these two categories.

Finally, we analyzed the miscellaneous items in the book club offerings. Figure 4 graphically illustrates the distribution of the most frequently appearing items (those with 10 or more in the collection); the rest include an assortment of items that includes maps, stuffed animals, cards, post-it notes, book plates, borders, stencils, plastic toys, and so on. It is clear that stickers, posters, and kits are the most frequently offered miscellaneous items, and this probably explains why some teachers and parents think that these are overrepresented in the book orders. Another reason why people think there are more of these items than in fact there are is because frequently stickers and posters are given away free to students or teachers as bonus items. Thus, they are often seen in the boxes that arrive in school. But only two stickers, posters, or kits are offered—on average—in each order, and while their presence at all is frowned on by many teachers and parents, their actual numbers are in fact very low.

While audio tapes play a significant role in the book club offerings (most of them are professional readings of books they accompany, for use in a listening center in the early grades), videotapes and computer software appear not to. Many of the videotapes are cartoons, and as such compete with video rental stores; the few that aren't, are quite expensive, comparatively speaking. In the context of professional videotapes, such as those that can be purchased from Public Television Stations, the book club tapes are very cheap. In the context of the book club offerings, however, they appear expensive. Similarly, the computer software is cheap by computer software standards, but expensive when viewed within the book club offerings.

The view we had of the book club offerings was one that no teacher, parent, or child could possibly have, given that the books and other materials cannot be previewed before purchasing. We have concluded that the book club offerings, when taken as a whole, represent a far greater range of topics, genres, cultural diversity, and award-winning books than some of our respondents think. The books and other materials not only cater to children of different reading abilities, background knowledge, and interests—the book clubs' primary mission—but also fulfill, to a very large extent, teachers' and parents' needs for books and other materials that can be used to invite children into reading, and

Figure 4
Number of Miscellaneous Items (Showing Only Those Represented by 10 or More Items in the Offerings)



to challenge them once they are there. To do this, teachers and parents will have to be selective, to be sure, but only in a few instances will they be unable to find appropriate material for their needs. This doesn't mean that book clubs render school and public libraries, and book stores, unnecessary—far from it—but it does say that book clubs can supply children, teachers, and parents with a substantial amount of literacy material that will cater to a wide range of

tastes and purposes, and supplement other sources for books and other reading matter.

Summary and Conclusions, Studies 1, 2, and 3

From the three studies that make up this research project, there are a number of conclusions to be drawn about the school book clubs.

First, there is no question that school book clubs, from their small beginnings in 1947, play a large--and we suspect growing--role in the provision of books and other materials to children, teachers, and parents in the elementary years. The original purpose of school book clubs was to offer interesting reading material to children, and today they are still fulfilling that purpose. We have no comparative data, but from what teachers, parents, and the book club publishers have told us, the range and quality of the offerings have steadily increased over the years. Our analysis of an entire year's offerings from three book clubs confirms that they offer a wide range of materials, across all the genres and major formats, and they include books that range from what children really enjoy (i.e., "popular" literature) to what teachers and librarians consider to be "good" literature—not assuming these to be mutually exclusive. Although the clubs are not literally "clubs" in the sense that children become members and have membership privileges (children may join and unjoin with every order), they do take seriously the notion that a book club should have something for everyone. In other words, a club should offer books for reluctant readers, to draw them into reading, as well as books for accomplished readers, to challenge and stimulate their advanced literary skills; they should have books on a wide range of topics, because readers have wide-ranging tastes; they should have books from different genres, because some readers like mysteries, while others like poetry, or informational books, or biographies. With few exceptions, the book clubs do offer something for everyone.

Second, while book clubs still regard their primary purpose as supplying children with books and other material, they appear, in the past few years, to have become a major supplier of literacy materials to classrooms. Again, we have no comparative data, and so we cannot tell when this trend started (nor even if it is a trend), but it is clear from the interviews and our classroom study that book club books are being used in a major way to supply trade books for elementary language arts programs. It is not hard to see why. In the past several years, there has been a growing trend in elementary education to deemphasize learning to read through textbooks and worksheets, and to reemphasize the use

of real literature for this purpose. Whether called "Whole Language" or "Literature-based," this movement has taken hold in many parts of the country, and even though whole language advocates may overestimate the number of teachers who have abandoned the basal reader, there is no question that even the most traditional teachers are beginning to increase the number of trade books they use in their language arts instruction. That teachers are still in transition is evident from our own findings in Study 1, but what is not in doubt is that the number of teachers who use the basal reader as the sole vehicle for literacy instruction is extremely low (2% of our sample). Whether teachers use the basal and supplement it with trade books (39%), use an equal mixture of basals and trade books (24%), use trade books and supplement them with the basal (18%), or if they use trade books only (18%), they still need trade books to a greater or lesser extent. That they often turn to the book clubs to meet this need is hardly surprising, for several reasons. One is that the book club books are already present, and are a known quantity—after all, children in their classrooms have been ordering from the book clubs for years, and it's the teacher who has been passing out the order forms. Another is price. Provided that a teacher is willing to have paperbacks (there are very few hardbound books offered by the clubs--2% to be precise), and provided that a book she is looking for is actually offered by a book club, she will pay a fraction of what it would cost to purchase the same book in a bookstore. (She will also pay less for the same book through a book club than in a book fair). Most books in the book clubs are between 50¢ and $3.50, with the median price being around $1.50. Even hard cover books are heavily discounted (most are priced at about $10: Chris Van Allsburg's "Polar Express," for example, sells for $9.95). Since teachers build up bonus points for every class order they send in—not enough, according to many teachers—they also are able to exchange bonus points for additional books, which in turn lowers the per-book price of those actually purchased. Using bonus points for adding books to their classroom libraries appears to be widespread among the teachers we interviewed, many of whom never actually purchase books themselves, relying instead on the bonus books. While book clubs are only one source of books for the classroom (teachers have their own personal collections, and they routinely use the school and local public libraries), the book clubs offer teacher the opportunity to put books permanently (as opposed to temporarily, as in the case of libraries) into the classroom. Apparently, the idea of having a permanent collection of trade books in the classroom appeals to many teachers (including several of those we studied in Study 2), and the book clubs make it easy to build up a collection quite rapidly and very inexpensively (in some cases, for free). A third reason is that the book clubs offer many of the books that teachers are looking for. While teachers complain about what they perceive is "junk" or "fad" materials in the book clubs, they are only alluding to one small part of the offerings; as we have already demonstrated in Study 3,

the book clubs offer a great more "quality" (in the teachers' words) literature than "junk," and there is an enormous selection of materials from which teachers can choose. It may be that they cannot get enough from a single book club, which may explain why so many teachers use more than one club, but there is no shortage of appropriate reading material for the typical elementary classroom program.

A second issue relates to the question of teacher and parental complaints about the presence of what they call "junk" and "fad" material. By "junk," they generally mean stickers and posters[4] and other non-literary items, including the activity books, and some of the videotapes (e.g., cartoons not based on literature). By "fad" books, they generally are referring to the "sports shots" books (books that present statistics and brief biographies of sports personalities); books based on TV and movies (for example, Ninja Mutant Turtles; Beverly Hills, 90210; Rock-A-Doodle), the popular series books (e.g., Baby-sitters Club; Boxcar Children; Sweet Valley High); and the joke books. This issue is not easily resolved. Book clubs are not nonprofit organizations, and book clubs that lose money go out of business. According to the publishers, it is the stickers, posters, and other popular items that sell in sufficient quantity to make it possible to offer what teachers call "quality" literature, which don't sell in profitable numbers. Also, the original purpose of book clubs was to offer children books and other items they enjoy, not to supply teachers with only the literature they think is appropriate. Children enjoy many books (series books, activity books, joke books) that adults don't care for, despite the fact that adults, when they were young, gravitated towards the very same items that their students now purchase from the book clubs. In fact, series books have been constantly popular for over 100 years, starting in the 1860s with the Oliver Optic series, and continuing with Bobbsey Twins (1900s), Tom Swift (1910s), Hardy Boys (1920s), and Nancy Drew (1930s). The currently popular ones (Baby-sitters Club, Boxcar Children, Sweet Valley High) are essentially modern versions of series books consumed by generations of children, and frowned on by generations of teachers and librarians. Also, we wonder: are romance novels, which routinely are amongst the best-selling books in the country for adults, any different than the children's series books? They may not win awards, but they clearly continue, year in and year out, to satisfy the reading needs of thousands of adults. There are two ways in which to look at the "junk" and "fad" books in the book clubs. One is to say that it's a lure (as one parent put it) placed

---

4 Not all posters fall into this category. Some posters are educational (for example, rain forest posters), and a few relate directly to books (for example, posters accompanying the Christopher Columbus books, or the Laura Ingalls Wilder books). However, these particular posters were free or bonus items.

in front of children to snare them into purchasing club materials; the other is to say that supplying children with items they want is a way to get them started with reading, especially as the clubs offer a full range of books, including award-winners. Our experience with public schools, and especially with teaching less able readers, is that children who find learning to read difficult need materials that excite them and draw them into reading. Once they become able to read, and interested in it, they need to be exposed to a broader range of books, and more challenging material. It is clear from our interviews and from the classroom study that the book club offerings do excite children and draw them into reading. The less able readers are ordering more of the "junk" and "fad" books, but teachers themselves are encouraging children to "enter" reading at a level they find comfortable. We have no evidence from this study (because of the shortness of its duration) that teachers are drawing these poorer readers into harder material, but our experience in schools tells us that they do. Sometimes, if you want to get children to read Newbery Award winning books, you have to start them with Baby-sitter books, or something at that level. This is not to say that students themselves only gravitate towards the less challenging material. We interviewed many children who frowned on the easier material with disdain similar to that of their parents and teachers. Our experience is that as children read more trade books, their appetite for "meatier" books grows, lessening the appeal for easier material.

A third issue relates to the unease that teachers have about the intrusion of commercial enterprises into their classroom. (We are curious as to why book clubs would be considered any more commercial than the instructional materials teachers use daily in their classrooms.) One of the reasons why teachers don't endorse the purchase of what they consider "quality" literature (and, conversely, discourage "junk" purchases) more than they do is because they are fearful that they are somehow pressuring children into spending money that perhaps they cannot afford. There is an incentive (and more so now that teachers are looking for additional trade books) for teachers to have full participation in the book clubs, but we found no evidence from teachers, children, or parents that any pressure is put on anyone to participate. But that does not mean that teachers aren't influencing what children buy from the clubs, nor does it stop them from findings ways around the problem of children not being able to afford the books. Many teachers reported that students frequently purchased books that the teacher had read in class, or books by an author or illustrator the teacher had talked about; many teachers went through the book orders, pointing out recommendations based on books they knew or authors they liked. Yet they always stopped short of "selling" books, and several children told us how their teachers talked about books but they went ahead and ignored what the teacher had recommended, knowing there

would be no fallout from making choices different from the teachers'. We are convinced from the interviews and from the classroom study that participation in the book clubs is entirely voluntary, and that teachers are determined not to cross the line where there is even an appearance of pressuring children into participating.

Fourth, we know very little about why teachers, parents, or children do not participate in the book clubs. Our samples were skewed towards those that do participate, and so we have a much better idea of the reasons for participating than not. From the few interviews with nonparticipating teachers, children, and parents, we think the major reasons are: (1) not enough time in the day to offer book clubs (this is especially true in grades where there are no longer self-contained classrooms); (2) adequate supply of books from elsewhere (some teachers and parents prefer borrowing books from school and public libraries; some have already well-stocked libraries of their own; some prefer buying books either from bookstores, or from book fairs); (3) strongly held views that the book clubs only offer poor quality literature; and (4) lack of parental support or funds. We find the first and the third reasons less convincing than the second and fourth. Given the amount of time it takes to distribute and collect the orders, we are not sure that time constraints are a real hindrance even in a departmentalized school (one teacher told us she really couldn't be bothered with it, which seems to us to be a more plausible excuse). Having analyzed the entire offerings of all three publishers for 1991-92, we would challenge the view that the book clubs only offer poor quality literature, and think that many parents and teachers who hold this view should take a fresh look at the offerings of all the clubs. We do think, however, that lack of parental funds is a major problem for classroom teachers, and yet we do not see how prices for book club books could be any lower than they are. Many teachers reported that they either spent their own money to help out a child who wanted books but couldn't afford them, or used bonus points for this purpose. Other teachers solved the problem by simply not participating in the clubs at all (although we weren't sure if this wasn't an excuse not to be bothered with participating in the first place.)

Finally, we are not sure exactly how book clubs contribute to children's literacy development (even the contribution of literacy instruction itself cannot be precisely determined), but we would offer at least three ways in which we think book clubs play a role in children's literacy growth. One is that book clubs are putting books directly into the hands of very large numbers of children across the country. The children are excited about ordering and receiving these books, and they obviously enjoy reading them, because many of the books are read over and over again. Although

children do order stickers and posters and other items, these are a small percentage of their orders--most of what they order are books. Book orders come in, are read, and then the books themselves accumulate in home libraries that are passed on from family member to the next. Many parents spoke to us about the contribution of book clubs to the accumulation of home libraries (in some cases, the book clubs added a few books to an already large collection; in others, the book club books were the bulk of the collection). These books are available for children to read, and they offer genuine alternatives to television watching and video games.

A second contribution of the book clubs is evident in the classroom. Here, we see book club books brought in from home and used by children to satisfy reading requirements (books read in independent reading time, books read for book talks or reports). We also see book club books read aloud by the teacher, or used for guided reading (directed reading of a single book, with multiple copies), or used as an integral part of a theme (e.g., an author theme focused on all the books by Eric Carle, or Roald Dahl, or Lois Lowry; or a conceptual theme on survival, using Scott O'Dell's "Sing Down the Moon," Jean Craighead George's "On the Far Side of the Mountain," or Avi's "True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle" as books for study). In these cases, book club books are being used to promote the literacy development of all children in the class, not just those who participate in the clubs. While it's true that nearly all of the book club books (at least those typically used in literature classes) are available through a library or bookstore, the fact that they are readily accessible to the teacher makes it all the more likely that they will in fact use them. And in parts of the country where school libraries are nonexistent or very poorly stocked, and where bookstores and public libraries are not within easy reach, the book club offerings can (and we heard from many teachers and parents that they do) provide the bulk if not all of the books needed for a trade-book literature program.

A third contribution that book clubs make is directly to children. Book clubs have, from the beginning, been voluntary: they offer children books and other literacy materials, and invite them to participate without any coercion whatsoever. Children, in turn, have choice and are actively involved in the selections they make. Moreover, the books they purchase from the book clubs (as opposed to the ones they borrow from the school or public library, or read from the classroom collection) are theirs to own. Ownership of books, building one's own collection of books, is a very important part of literacy, and it is one of the features of book clubs that teachers, parents, and children themselves most highly value. Thirdly, participating in the book clubs is an active demonstration (among others, such as reading aloud

to children, visiting the school and public library, talking about books, etc.) of shared literary values among children, parents, and teachers. In our study, we found this to be most active between parents and their children, but we also found evidence of it between teachers and students. Finally, children benefit from participating in the book clubs either to supplement the voluntary reading they do in a literature-based classroom, or to comprise the bulk of their voluntary reading if they are in a literature-impoverished instructional program. Poor readers may benefit most from book club reading, not only because there is a tendency for them to be denied full access to books in some classrooms, but also because book clubs are so good at providing them with the "entry-level" books they need to get started with reading on their own.

Thus we believe that book clubs make an important contribution to children's literacy development, both directly for those who participate in them, and indirectly for those who encounter book club books in their language arts programs.

References

Allington, R. L. (1992). Reducing the risk: Integrated language arts in restructured elementary schools. In L. M. Morrow, L. C. Wilkinson, & J. Smith (Eds.), The integrated language arts: Controversy to consensus. New York: Allyn-Bacon.

Anderson, R.C., Osborn, J., & Tierney, R. (1984). Learning to read in American schools: Basal readers and context texts. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Anderson, R.C., Wilson, P.T., & Fielding, L.G. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. Reading Research Quarterly, 23 (3), 285-303.

Canney, G., & Neuenfeldt, C. (1992). Some teachers' perspectives on the use of instructional materials in reading. Unpublished paper. University of Idaho, Moscow.

Huck, C., Hepler, S., & Hickman, J. (1987). Children's literature in the elementary school, 4th edition. New York: Holt.

Iser, W. (1978). The act of reading. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lukens, R. J. (1982). A critical handbook of children's literature. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Shannon, P. (1983). The use of commercial reading materials in American elementary schools. Reading Research Quarterly, 19, 68-85.

Taylor, B.M., Frye, B.J. & Maruyama, G.M. (1990). Time spent reading and reading growth. American Educational Research Journal, 27, (2), 351-362.

Walmsley, S. A., Fielding, L. F., & Walp, T.P. (1991). Home and school literary experiences of 2nd grade children. Albany, NY: Center for the Teaching and Learning of Literature.

Walmsley, S.A. & Walp, T.P. (1989). Teaching literature in elementary school. Albany, NY: Center for the Teaching and Learning of Literature.